

North Somerset Council

Report to the Place Panel

Date of Meeting: 23/11/2022 14:00

Subject of Report: Bus Service and BSIP Update

Town or Parish:

Officer/Member Presenting: Bella Fortune

Key Decision: No

Reason:

Recommendations

The place panel requests a scrutiny session with the local DVSA representative to understand what actions are being taken to reduce lost mileage with the local First Bus and Stagecoach operating companies.

1. Summary of Report

The Public Transport team has produced a briefing for the place scrutiny panel following the 1 year anniversary of the BSIP bidding document, and the recent commercial and supported bus changes as the local bus market adjusts to a post covid operating environment. A powerpoint presentation is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

2. Policy

The Council adopted a regional bus strategy in 2017, <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/bus-strategy/>. The council also adopted and published a joint Bus Service Improvement plan <https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/transport/bus-service-improvement-plan/> which this report aims to provide an update on.

3. Details

This report is accompanied by a presentation in appendix 1 which contains a detailed update on the status of the commercial and supported network along with detailed figures on the state of the network. It is attached for consumption prior to the meeting and for discussion at the Place panel.

4. Consultation

The council is due to undertake joint technical consultation on the adoption of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme with the bus operators who have a right to object to the content of the EP, and the statutory bodies defined by the DfT. This is not a public consultation. The EP

makes provision for a customer charter to engage the public, and an annual bus user forum for open public consultation. These will commence once the EP is made (expected from January 2023). Consultation with residents on the deployment and operation of Demand Responsive transport will be required between December 2022 and January 2023, this can't happen until we have a confirmed delivery partner following the shared tender with the Combined Authority.

5. Financial Implications

The council are awaiting a decision of HM treasury to approve and release the BSIP funding, as now approved by the DfT this remains £48.5m or capital funding and £57m Or revenue funding at the time of this report.

Costs

The council is spending at risk to mobilise capital schemes ready for delivery in February 2023 along with the Combined Authority, the DfT have approved our spending profile, and an early launch of the fares package initiative worth circa £20, over the 2 years of the BSIP funding.

Funding

The delivery of the 48.5m of capital schemes will enable the council to generate ongoing revenue funding from bus lane and moving traffic violations in future years reducing its reliance on core revenue grants.

6. Legal Powers and Implications

The council will need to make the EP with combines authority in order to release the BSIP funding. A condition of the funding is to also memorialise the revenue funding commitments from 2021/2022 when the bid was submitted.

7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

The BSIP and the associated funding is a key policy mechanism to deliver carbon reductions, by providing a viable alternative to single occupancy car journeys, the funding represents a once in a generation opportunity to rebuild and improve the public transport and active travel network. The bsip capital schemes will enable the bus network to operate at a higher frequency with less resources.

8. Risk Management

The council have limited the spending at risk to essential works preparation, the program of works is approaching a hold position pending the autumn Statement and the final approval of the BSIP funding from HMT. The DfT have confirmed the BSIP and EP exceed expectations. The funding is the last of 32 to be approved in England.

The council are supporting the bus industry with guaranteed ENCTS funding for the duration of 2022/23, in exchange for a guarantee of services being sustained to 80% of pre covid levels. The reliability of services has been below the desired levels for the last 6 months. The DVSA are responsible for enforcing the service levels. Residents are expecting improvements to service reliability, as such the council needs the DVSA to provide more clarity and transparency on what is being done to build the driver workforce and ensure provision meets expectation now and as we invest in the network through BSIP funding.

9. Equality Implications

No.

This report is an update and does not require one at this time.

10. Corporate Implications

The delivery of the BSIP will have impacts on most residents in North Somerset, with lower fares, more reliable and faster bus services, delivering services that are more flexible to changing demands. The overarching aim is to ensure we have socially necessary services that provide access to education, employment, and essential retail, fostering a commercially sustainable environment for operators to have confidence to invest in.

11. Options Considered

None

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Appendices:

Bus and BSIP Scrutiny Update 22

Background Papers:

None