

Record of Decisions

Bus Service Improvement Plan

Decision Taker

Cabinet on 19 October 2021.

Decision

That the Cabinet:

1. Note the National Bus Strategy's overarching goal to grow bus patronage: both to build it back after the pandemic and then to increase it and raise buses' mode share and to approve the priorities and principles set out in this report and appendices for inclusion within the Bus Service Improvement Plan and continue to support the work towards an Enhanced Bus Partnership by 31st March 2022; and
2. Delegates the publication and submission of the final plan by 31st October 2021 to the Assistant Director – Planning, Housing and Climate Emergency in consultation with Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, Environment and Culture.

Reason for the Decision

The submission of the Bus Service Improvement Plan will improve accessibility for everyone across Torbay, improve connectivity to facilities whether that is education, health, employment or other, ensuring those most deprived are not excluded from that connectivity, supporting our town centres and other trip generating hubs in our towns, and helps to move journeys away from the private car and onto zero emission buses to contribute to reductions in Torbay's carbon footprint.

Implementation

The decision in respect of the Bus Service Improvement Plan will come into force immediately as the decision maker has decided that any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would prejudice the Public' and Council's interest. The Overview and Scrutiny Co-ordinator was consulted on 5 October 2021.

Information

On 15th March 2021 the Government published the National Bus Strategy, 'Bus Back Better'. The strategy sets out a vision for improving bus services nationally. It recognises the need to act quickly, whilst acknowledging that the industry will need ongoing support for some time to recover from the consequences of Covid-19. The aim was to re-establish patronage at pre-covid levels and then to exceed them. To do this, buses must be a practical and attractive alternative to the car.

The strategy makes it clear that funding will be made available to Local Authorities who pursue this vision and seek to make the improvements to their services and network. This has clear direct benefits to the Local Authority, not least in respect of accessibility for the community and supporting the carbon neutrality aims.

Following agreement earlier this year for the authority to enter into a partnership with operators,

the next step in the process is publication of a Bus Service Improvement Plan by 31st October 2021. The Plan sets out a vision and priorities for the future of bus services in Torbay and will be a high-level bidding document used to secure capital and revenue grant funding from the Department for Transport.

At the meeting Councillor Morey proposed and Councillor Law seconded a motion that was agreed unanimously by the Cabinet, as set out above.

Alternative Options considered and rejected at the time of the decision

The options for this decision are to:

Option 1: agree a Bus Service Improvement Plan and therefore continue the process towards a Partnership.

Option 2: to take the decision to no longer pursue a Bus Service Improvement Plan. This option was discounted due to the Local Transport Plan supporting bus travel already, the opportunities through the partnership for a greater level of improvement in services helping to meet the corporate visions and objectives, and the ongoing work towards carbon neutrality.

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Does the call-in procedure apply?

No

Declarations of interest (including details of any relevant dispensations issued by the Standards Committee)

None.

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22 October 2021

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Leader of Torbay Council on behalf of the Cabinet