

RECORD OF EXECUTIVE DECISION

Tuesday, 15 June 2021

Decision No: (CAB 21/22 31941)

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
PORTFOLIO AREA:	Cabinet Member for Growth
SUBJECT:	National Bus Strategy
AUTHOR:	Iain Steane

THE DECISION

Having complied with paragraph 15 of the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, Cabinet agreed the following:-

- (i) To Note the outline and aspirations of the National Bus Strategy and how it aligns and supports the Council's current transport strategy (Connected Southampton 2040) and delivery programmes (Transforming Cities Fund & Future Transport Zone).
- (ii) To approve the development of the Enhanced Partnership as the most appropriate statutory route for buses in Southampton; to delegate authority to the Executive Director Place to publish a Notice of Intent as required in section 138F of Transport Act 2000 by 30th June 2021, and to develop the subsequent Bus Services Improvement Plan.
- (iii) To delegate authority to the Executive Director Place, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Growth, to negotiate, develop and finalise the specific content of the agreements for the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, and the Bus Service Improvement Plan, subject to complying with the statutory preparation, notice and consultation on both.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

1. This report is submitted for consideration as a General Exception under paragraph 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the City Council's Constitution, notice having been given to the Chair of the relevant Scrutiny Panel and the Public.
2. The reason for this Exception is to meet a Department of Transport deadline of 30th June 2021, for the City Council to set out, via a Notice of Intent, the statutory route for buses in Southampton as set out in this report and expected by the National Bus Strategy. If this is not done before this date the Council would not be eligible for any further financial support for buses from the Government.

3. The Enhanced Partnership requires a statutory notice to proceed, initially a Notice of Intent, and is a policy decision affecting all wards within Southampton.
4. A Bus Service Improvement Plan is required under the National Bus Strategy that covers the LTA area and extending into neighbouring areas.

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Do Nothing – not recommended; as failure to commit to a EP as a minimum statutory instrument as set out in the NBS, would have an impact on the level of funding SCC receives from central Government for bus services (Supported Services), Concessionary Fares Reimbursement, Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) and Bus Services Operator Grant (BSOG) as set out in the National Bus Strategy. It is also an expectation of Government, as set out in the NBS that LTAs work towards the creation of an EP and development of a BSIP in order to continue to access future national funding opportunities.

Franchising – not recommended; within the NBS and Bus Services Act 2017 there is provision and powers for SCC to take on the franchise of local bus services. Under franchising the Council would take on greater powers and control of local buses – setting standards, timetables, fares, networks etc. Franchising is within the remit of Mayoral Combined Authorities and would require the approval of the Secretary of State. Franchising typically takes longer to achieve, requiring additional resource, and still requires an EP to be in place beforehand. For Southampton’s bus market this is not the most appropriate route at this stage.

Existing Quality Bus Partnership – not recommended; the existing Southampton QBP was developed in 2012 as a voluntary partnership between SCC and the bus operators. It has been invaluable in growing bus patronage in Southampton and assisted in leveraging in investment in buses and infrastructure such as Better Bus Fund and Transforming Cities. Through TCF the QBP was to be strengthened but this has been superseded by the requirements of the NBS and Government and would not satisfy the minimum requirement set by Government. The assessment also concluded that current partnership legislation does not provide the level of protection for local authorities and bus operators when considering the value and scale of investment set out by the Government.

OTHER RELEVANT MATTERS CONCERNING THE DECISION

None.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

CONFIRMED AS A TRUE RECORD

We certify that the decision this document records was made in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 and is a true and accurate record of that decision.

Date: 15th June, 2021

Decision Maker:
The Cabinet

Proper Officer:
Judy Cordell

SCRUTINY

Note: This decision will come in to force at the expiry of 5 working days from the date of publication subject to any review under the Council’s Scrutiny “Call-In” provisions.

Call-In Period expires on

Date of Call-in *(if applicable) (this suspends implementation)*

Call-in Procedure completed *(if applicable)*

Call-in heard by *(if applicable)*

Results of Call-in *(if applicable)*