DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP) & EVENING BUS FARES SUPPORT
DATE OF DECISION:	18 OCTOBER, 2021
REPORT OF:	COUNCILLOR MOULTON CABINET MEMBER FOR GROWTH

CONTACT DETAILS					
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Not applicable

BRIEF SUMMARY

This report seeks approval for Southampton's draft Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which is a requirement of the Department for Transport's (DfT) National Bus Strategy (NBS). The BSIP is the first phase towards Southampton City Council establishing an Enhanced Partnership with the local bus operators.

This report outlines the how the Southampton BSIP meets the Government's aspirations and requirements of the NBS following co-development with the bus operators. It sets out the ambition for buses and how Southampton will look to bid for a share of the national funding of £3bn for buses to improve journey times, increase patronage and make buses a more attractive travel option for people.

This report sets out the options for the BSIP:

- Do Nothing do not approve and submit a BSIP to Government which would mean not progressing to the subsequent stage of entering an Enhanced Partnership with the local bus operators; or
- Progress with the approval and submission of the BSIP to Government and the ongoing commitment to establish an Enhanced Partnership with the local bus operators to improve bus services, customer experience and increase number of people using buses.

This report also outlines an advanced intervention of the BSIP, which is to seek approval for the Council support through a subsidy the ongoing £1 Evening Bus Fare, which has to date been commercially operated by the local bus operators and has supported the city's economic recovery. To allow the offer to continue up until the end of March 2022, this will require funding from the Council as a temporary amendment to the Southampton Concessionary Fares Scheme as approved at Cabinet in March 2021.

It seeks delegated authority for the finalisation of the BSIP to the Executive Director of Place, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Growth, and Legal & Finance. It seeks delegated authority to the Executive Director Place in consultation with the S151 Officer for the administration of the Evening Bus Fare.

	Finance. It seeks delegated authority to the Executive Director Place in consultation with the S151 Officer for the administration of the Evening Bus Fare.				
RECO	RECOMMENDATIONS:				
	(i)	To approve the draft Southampton Bus Service Improvement Plan as required by the National Bus Strategy for publication and submission to the Department for Transport, and delegate authority to the Executive Director Place to make any necessary changes to the draft BSIP before submission, undertake consultation on the Enhanced Partnership, and carry out the annual BSIP review following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Growth.			
	(ii)	To approve the temporary change to the Southampton Concessionary Fare scheme to offer a local discretionary enhancement under Localism Act 2011 Section 1 to financially support the bus operator commercial offer for the £1 Evening Bus Fare and to extend the current Concessionary Fare eligibility categories in relation to this discretionary element of the Scheme only, this will apply until 31st March 2022.			
	(iii)	To delegate authority to the Executive Director Place, following consultation with the Cabinet Members for Growth and Finance to determine the mechanism to administer the Evening Fares support under the Concessionary Fares reimbursement provisions.			
REAS	ONS FOR	REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS			
1.	A Bus Service Improvement Plan is required under the National Bus Strategy that covers the Local Transport Authority (LTA) area and extending into neighbouring areas. This covers all wards in Southampton and needs to be published by 31st October 2021.				
2.	is requi	A temporary enhancement to the Southampton Concessionary Fares scheme is required to be made by Cabinet to support Southampton's economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.			
3.	Statuto	ry Consultation is required on any proposed Enhanced Partnership.			
ALTER	RNATIVE	OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED			
4.	Do Nothing – not recommended; as failure to publish a BSIP 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, Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) 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, as a minimum, work towards the creation of an EP and development of a BSIP to continue to access future national funding opportunities.				
5.	£1 Evening Fare – not to provide support to the bus operators commercial offer – not recommended; the changes to the evening parking charges in SCC on and off street parking have impacted on bus patronage in Southampton. Bus operators may reduce evening service frequency and reduce investment in buses in Southampton.				

DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)

6. Background

In March 2021 the Government published the National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better' as its long-term strategy for buses in England outside London. It aims to support economic recovery from Covid, meeting carbon emissions targets and increase investment in buses to London standards making buses an attractive alternative to the car. It sets out Government's vision to improve local bus services through greater local leadership, to reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage passengers back to the bus.

- 7. The aim is that Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and local bus operators work at pace with local communities to plan and deliver a fully integrated service with simple, multi-modal tickets, faster and more reliable services, the same high quality information for all passengers, and better turn-up-and-go frequencies that keep running into the evenings and weekends. The NBS aims for this to be achieved via:
 - Bus service improvements on a network basis;
 - Bus priority to reduce journey times and improve reliability;
 - Cleaner & greener vehicles;
 - Partnership working between Local Authorities and bus operators; and
 - Better co-ordination between operators, particularly as the country emerges from Covid pandemic to avoid services being planned commercially and separate from what the LTA may want to achieve for its area.

This will be supported by Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) from 1st July 2021, reforms to the Bus Service Operators Grant – a ringfenced subsidy used to support bus services or the infrastructure they use (BSOG), and an additional £3bn to support delivery of the strategy. This funding is only available to LTA's who are willing to develop an Enhanced Partnership (EP) and publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

- 8. To access the funding the DfT has placed expectations on LTAs to develop EPs and a BSIP and there are three steps to proceed through:
 - End of June 2021 LTA to have published which statutory path to follow – on 15th June 2021 agreed Cabinet to pursue an Enhanced Partnership and published a Notice of Intent;
 - End of October 2021 each LTA will need to publish a BSIP updated annually and reflected in Local Transport Plans (LTPs); and
 - 3. End of March 2022 LTA needs to have EPs in place as an end-state to access new funding including BSOG.

From April 2022 the BSIP should be delivered either via the EP or franchising approaches.

9. Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

A BSIP is developed by the LTA in collaboration with bus operators, community transport bodies and local businesses, services and people. It covers the whole LTA area and buses within it, focusing on delivering the bus network that the LTA and residents want to see including under and over provision of services and integration with other modes. A single BSIP could be developed with other LTAs particularly where economies and travel patterns overlap significantly.

A BSIP aims to set out a high-level strategy and ambition for achieving the 10. aims of the EP and detailed delivery plan. They should cover: The current situation for buses, population and travel demands in the area: Proposals for improvement – how the LTA and operators propose to deliver the key goals on the Bus Strategy in Southampton; and Post Covid Challenges. An estimate of the funding needed to deliver on the proposals can also be included. Government will look at the ambition and delivery of the BSIP when deciding on funding for buses also for funding for wider non-bus transport projects. 11. The first outline Southampton BSIP is a high level ambition document and is required to be submitted to the DfT by 31st October 2021. It should be consistent and integrated with the adopted Local Transport Plan (LTP) and be updated annually. Need to be integrated with LTP and other strategies such as Cycling, Walking and Decarbonisation. This will then inform and guide the EP process due to be completed by April 2022. The draft BSIP is included in Appendix 1. 12. Since the publication of the Notice of Intent in June 2021, officers have been working closely with the bus operators and neighbouring authorities to develop the draft BSIP to set out a joint vision and aims for buses in Southampton. The BSIP sets out a high level vision of buses in Southampton, including how to continue to increase bus patronage in response to Covid. It includes plans for how it will be delivered and the targets for them. The BSIP covers the Southampton City Council Local Transport Authority area but also references the wider City Region including Hampshire. 13. The BSIP will cover the period up until 2030 and will be reviewed annually to ensure that it is relevant and the ambition remains. The first review will be summer 2022, with subsequent ones happening each year to review progress against targets and activities, and setting the delivery and funding plans. This will mean that the BSIP is a live document and able to be agile to reflect any changes in local, regional or national policy or ambition. The annual updates to the BSIP will be agreed in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member. 14. The draft BSIP includes a vision statement has been developed - That buses are a mode of choice where the bus network is built on reliability, green, integration, affordability, inclusivity & partnership to get Southampton moving to meet its needs now and in future. 15. The BSIP then sets out nine ambitions for buses with targets, commitments and approach that would be delivered over the period of the BSIP. The ambitions are: 1. Buses are an attractive alternative – fast, modern and reliable Accessibility audits to bus stops and prioritise road and footway improvements on bus routes as part of annual maintenance programme, Improve all bus stops with a minimum of Legible Bus flag, pole, a shelter where possible, bus stop road markings, lighting, safe routes, raised kerbs with accurate timetable & route information by 2025,

- Business case for funding to remove bus journey pinchpoint at Northam Rail Bridge,
- Kickstart funding to improve service frequency, the length of operating day and Sundays, such as service enhancements to Harefield, Peartree, Upper Shirley and Freemantle, and
- All buses to have USB charging points, latest next stop audio & visual announcements, upgrade to inter-city services with additional charging and tables;
- 2. Southampton's bus network will be accessible to all and frequent
 - Widespread implementation of Traffic Signal Bus Priority by 2024,
 - Use parking and traffic management tools e.g. Red Routes, enforcement, coordinating roadworks to reduce disruption and delay for buses:
- 3. Bus travel is affordable, offer value for money and achieves multioperator access
 - Continue roll out of capped fares with Tap On, Tap Off readers in Southampton and City Region so people are charged the best value and simplest fare for their journey from 2022,
 - Roll out of Solent Mobility as a Service product from 2022,
 - Innovative fare and ticket offers for evening fares, those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs), families or groups that offer good value for money, and
 - Develop a Solent-wide Young Persons (e.g. 16-21yrs) product that provides discounted bus travel;
- 4. Buses will be easy to understand and use with consistent information
 - Improve timetable provision with e-ink screens to replace paper timetables by 2025, and
 - Expand roll out of real-time information to most stops with update digital screen displays by 2025;
- 5. Buses are integrated and interchange with other modes and are planned into new developments
 - Implement network of Local Mobility Hubs with micro and shared mobility service such as Shirley, Swaythling, Bitterne, Sholing and Redbridge/Millbrook;
- 6. The City Centre and District Centres are hubs within the network and buses are needed to support their sustainable growth;
- 7. Buses lead the way for the decarbonisation of transport
 - Work will all the bus operators to phase out diesel fleets from 2022 to have an all-electric bus fleet in Southampton by 2030;
- 8. Develop a Passenger Charter so passengers can input into the future of buses
 - Work with operators and BBLP to link on-board CCTV into the Citywatch system;

and

- **9.** This is the first step the development of transformation of the Southampton Mass Transit System (SMTS).
- 16. A set of performance targets have been set in the BSIP to monitor progress in bus travel in Southampton:
 - Reliable Bus Journey Times A year on year improvement in bus journey time reliability;

Reliability & Punctuality - improve bus punctuality so that 95% of bus services are operating to time; Patronage Growth – to continue to grow bus passenger numbers in Southampton and City Region as the economy recovers from Covid; Increase the people mode share of bus into the City Centre; and Passenger Satisfaction - increase bus passenger satisfaction across Southampton. 17. Reporting on the BSIP will be done six-monthly against the targets, with an annual review carried out against all targets and delivery. 18. The BSIP includes a funding ask, to be finalised for publication, capital and revenue from the DfT. It is expected that there will be no additional funding ask of the Council beyond annual LTP Integrated Transport Block funding. The DfT funding will be for delivery of the activities in the BSIP such as continued investment in bus priority, bus stops and real time information, support new and increased frequency bus services, development of Rapid Bus Corridors that have been started through the Transforming Cities programme, innovative fare offers for families and young people, and kickstarting services including Park & Ride or increasing bus frequencies. The final amount received by Southampton will depend on the DfT's assessment of the BSIP, its ambition, commitments from both bus operators and the LTA, and deliverability. An update will be provided to Cabinet/Council when this is clarified for approval. 19. The BSIP is a prelude to the Enhanced Partnership (EP) that the Council will be developing with bus operators, public and stakeholders over coming months in readiness for approval and commencement by April 2022. The EP is a statutory partnership and will require consultation with the bus operators and the public. Consultation 20. Co-development of the BSIP has been done with the bus operators in Southampton - GoSouth Coast, First Group, Xelabus and University of Southampton (as the owners of UniLink services) to ensure that the operators are jointly involved in its development and all parties buy-in to the process and the aims of the EP. 21. The BSIP will follow the objectives and priorities in the EP and is not required to have had formal consultation but needs to be developed in partnership with local bus operators. For the EP there will need to be formal public consultation with residents. 22. businesses, visitors, existing bus passengers, and Ward Members on the draft Plan and Schemes. This will need, as a minimum, to consult all bus operators, Traffic Commissioners, Police, Transport Focus, Competition & Markets Authority, and other deemed appropriate by the LTA. Bus operators have two opportunities to object (28 days) to the draft EP before formal public consultation and before the EP Plan is legally 'made'. 23. Funding & Resource The DfT has provided an initial revenue capability funding (£212,000) towards the development on in-house resources for the preparation of both the EP and the BSIP. This will provide additional capacity for 1xFTE and consultant support within the Green City & Infrastructure service area. Delivery of any activities from the BSIP and EP will be through existing contractual

arrangements such as the Highways Service Partnership, partnerships for Solent Go, directly with the bus operators, or bus shelter contract with ClearChannel.

24. Timeline

The key dates for the preparation, consultation and making of the EP Plan & Scheme and BSIP are set out below. Dates highlighted in **bold** are key dates set by the DfT.

Activity	Who	Dates (indicative)
Cabinet Approval to prepare an EP	SCC	18 June 2021
Issue Notice of Intent to Prepare an EP - completed	SCC	30 June 2021
Formal discussions on EP and BSIP	SCC, HCC & Local Bus Operators	July-October 2021
Seek approval from draft BSIP and to consult	Cabinet	October 2021
Issue a Notice that an EP Plan and BSIP have been prepared	Cabinet	October 2021
BSIP Submitted to DfT	SCC	31 October 2021
Preparation of the EP	SCC, HCC &	October 2021-
	Local Bus	January 2021
	Operators	
Local Bus Operators Objection	Local Bus	November 2021
Period on EP (minimum 28 days)	Operators	
Formal (Public) Consultation on	SCC, HCC &	December-
EP	Local Bus	January 2022
	Operators	
Consultation Outcomes and Approval to 'make' the EP Plan	SCC Cabinet	February 2022
Issue Notice to 'make' the EP	SCC	February 2022
Local Bus Operators Objection	Local Bus	February-March
Period	Operators	2022
EP Plan Made		31 March 2022
Commence Planning and	SCC, Local Bus	From April 2022
Delivery – any funding will	Operators	
require the necessary approvals		

25. Evening Bus Fare Support

Cabinet determined on 19 July 2021 on the removal of all evening parking charges (18:00-Midnight) in all Council off-street car parks (including the multi-stories) and on-street parking bays. The off-street parking charges in the multi-stories are removed until June 2023 with surface car parks and onstreet being permanent. This determination was approved at Cabinet on 19th July. In parallel to this, the main bus operators – Bluestar and First – introduced a promotional £1 Evening Bus Fare to further attract customers into the City Centre. This forms part of the package of activities to support Southampton's night-time economy to recover from the Covid pandemic. This early advanced measure that supports lower and value for money fares are well-aligned with and are part of the package of measures being proposed in the BSIP to make bus travel more affordable and attractive.

26.	The promotional evening fare commercially offered by the bus operartors initially ran until 5 th September 2021. A fare at this level has been deemed by the bus operators as being unsustainable commercially. Overall bus patronage in Southampton is approximately 65% of pre-pandemic levels.
27.	Both bus operators have approached the Council requesting support to continue the fare offer initially to the end of December 2021, with potential to March 2022.
28.	Officers have had discussions with the bus operators following the requests. The support would initially run from 6 th September to 31 st December 2021. Depending on the uptake and operation of the support this could be extended to March 2022. The administration of the support will be through the existing reimbursement for the Concessionary Fares. An initial grace period of 2-months from the start of the support and values will be capped at an agreed determined level equivalent to evening bus patronage prior to the introduction of the free evening parking charges in July 2021.
29.	The appropriate mechanism for administering this scheme is via a local discretionary enhancement to the approved Southampton Concessionary Fares scheme. The 2021/22 scheme and reimbursement methodology was approved at Cabinet on 16 th March 2021. A temporary enhancement is required to provide the funding for the Evening Fares using discretion under the Localism Act 2011 and necessary Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 4). This enhancement will be outside of the Concessionary Fare categories.
30.	The amended Concessionary Fare Scheme is set out in Appendix 2 with relevant sections relating to the Evening Fares highlighted detailing the duration, reimbursement methodology, and monitoring.
RESOU	RCE IMPLICATIONS
<u>Capital</u>	Revenue
31.	The costs of preparing, engaging and finalising the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) has been funded by two Department for Transport (DfT) revenue grants totalling £212,000. This will be used to develop in-house capabilities for the preparation of both the Enhanced Partnership (EP) and the BSIP by providing additional capacity for a 1 x FTE post; consultant support; communications plus covering other related costs. Any (minimal) expenditure above the level of DfT grant will be met from existing revenue resources within Transport Policy.
32.	Delivery of any activities as a part of the BSIP and EP will be delivered through existing contractual arrangements such as the Highways Service Partnership, partnerships for Solent Go, directly with bus operators, or under the bus shelter contract with ClearChannel. A subsequent Cabinet/Council report in March 2022 will provide an update on these and request any subsequent approvals if required.
33.	Delivery and funding of any infrastructure schemes that arise from the EP or BSIP will be incorporated into the Council's standard business planning process. These will require additional funding from sources such as the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG); the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG); Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport Block funding; Transforming Cities Fund; Green City funding; or any future funding from central Government e.g.

	Levelling Up Fund, ZEBRA. A subsequent Cabinet/Council report in March 2022 will provide and update on these and request any subsequent approvals if required.
34.	The publication of an EP and BSIP are a requirement of the National Bus Strategy in order for the Council to access funding for buses, indicated at £3bn, including BSOG, BRG, decarbonisation of buses, infrastructure and supported services. The ambition and performance on the BSIP will be considered when doing funding allocations for wider, non-bus local transport schemes.
35.	The cost of the Evening Bus Fares Support will be met from a one-off budget saving from the Concessionary Fares budget. The estimated funding envelope to December 2021, is £176,800, or £353,600 to March 2022. Claims by bus operators will be capped at a level, to be agreed in advanced, based on patronage levels prior to the removal of evening parking charges.
Propert	y/Other
35.	There are not property implications with this report
36.	SCC has liaised with bus operators and Hampshire County Council on the BSIP.
LEGAL	IMPLICATIONS
Statuto	ry power to undertake proposals in the report:
37.	A Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership is available to the Council as LTA under Sections 110, 111 & 113 of the Transport Act 2000 and Bus Services Act 2017.
38.	Concessionary Fares are governed by the Transport Acts of 1985 and 2000, and the Concessionary Fares Act of 2007. S.1 Localism Act 2011 provides the ability to make temporary enhancements to the Concessionary Fares outside of the defined categories under the 2007 Act using local discretion to provide a stand alone subsidy enhancement that is separate to its local transport functions to support pandemic recovery activities.
Other L	egal Implications:
39.	Any scheme or change to a scheme must be made having regard to the Human Rights Act 1998 (with any national minimum scheme will be deemed to comply) and the Equalities Act 2010, in particular the Public Sector Equalities duty. A comprehensive Equalities Impact assessment has been completed in order to inform the recommendations and scheme and scheme enhancements are offered in order to positively assist local people and business access essential services and workplaces via public transport in a safe and Covid secure manner and restore confidence in using public transport in a time where pandemic recovery activities are key to securing a return to use of sustainable travel options.
40.	The statutory consultation and development of Enhanced Plans will be subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equalities Act 2010, s.17 Crime & Disorder Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998. The detailed Plan and consultation will be accompanied by an EISA setting out implications and mitigations for those with protected characteristics as well as economic and environmental impacts that will be taken into account in determining the final form of the Plans.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 41. The key risks include:
 - Obligations are placed by the Plan and/or Scheme upon the Council which are not fundable/acceptable/deliverable;
 - The BSIP is not supported by Bus Operators through the formal objection period;
 - Evening Fares continues beyond March 2022;
 - The Council is unable to complete with the BSIP within the timescales required of the National Bus Strategy.

These risks are being mitigated through continued engagement between the Council and other parties to the EP and BSIP, and the content to be negotiated and finalised as per the report recommendations.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

The BSIP will need to be consistent with the Council's Policy Framework with the Local Transport Plan (LTP4) Connected Southampton 2040 as the current adopted statutory transport policy for Southampton. An Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) accompanies this report.

KEY D	ECISION?	Yes		
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:		FECTED:	All	
	SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION			
Appen	Appendices			
1.	Draft Southampton Bus Service Improvement Plan			
2.	Amended Southampton Concessionary Fares Scheme			
3.	Equalities Impact Assessment – BSIP			
4.	Equalities Impact A	ualities Impact Assessment – Evening Fares		
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Documents In Members' Rooms

Documents in members 100ms					
1.					
2.					
Equality	y Impact Assessment				
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.					
Data Pr	Data Protection Impact Assessment				
	Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection No Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.				
Other Background Documents Other Background documents available for inspection at:					
Title of	itle of Background Paper(s) Relevant Paragraph of the Access				

	Schedule 12A allowing docube Exempt/Confidential (if ap		e 12A allowing document to npt/Confidential (if applicable)
1.			
2.			