

**Wiltshire Council**

**Environment Select Committee**

**14 June 2022**

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**Passenger Transport service update and future developments  
of the Council's public transport services**

**Executive summary**

This report intends to update the Environment Select Committee on the Council's progress on a number of public transport projects.

The report also provides updates on potential future developments

**Proposal**

That the Committee:

- (i) notes the outcome of our Bus Service Improvement Plan funding bid, that we have made an Enhanced Partnership and that we are seeking alternative Funding Streams.
- (ii) notes that we are progressing work on implementing our successful Rural Mobility Fund bid.
- (iii) notes that we have committed our Supported Bus Services Fund to secure routes that would otherwise have ceased to run.
- (iv) notes that we are contributing to the development of Local Transport Plan 4.
- (v) notes that costs related to the passenger transport sector continue to rise significantly, contributed to by the lack of available drivers.
- (vi) notes that passenger numbers are only at around 75% of pre covid levels in Wiltshire.

**Reason for proposal**

Information update report, as requested by the Committee.

**Author:** Jason Salter, Head of Service Passenger Transport  
Contact details: [Jason.salter@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:Jason.salter@wiltshire.gov.uk) 01225 713334

## Wiltshire Council

### Environment Select Committee

14 June 2022

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### Passenger Transport service update and future developments of the Council's public transport services

#### Purpose of report

1. This report intends to update the Environment Select Committee on the Council's progress on a number of public transport projects.
2. The report also provides updates on potential future developments.

#### Background

##### 3. Bus Service Improvement Plan Funding

We were unsuccessful in our bid for funding for our Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). Only 31 of 77 Local Transport Authorities (LTA) will be receiving funding, and then at a level considerably below their application in many cases, with a total ask of £7.2 billion.

##### 3.1 The successful authorities are:

- Blackburn with Darwen and Lancashire (joint submission): £34.2m
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole: £8.9m
- Brighton and Hove: £27.9m
- Central Bedfordshire: £3.7m
- City of York: £17.4m
- Cornwall: £13.3m
- Derby City: £7.0m
- Derbyshire: £47.0m
- Devon: £14.1m
- East Sussex: £41.4m
- Greater Manchester: £94.8m
- Hertfordshire: £29.7m
- Kent: £35.1m
- Liverpool City Region: £12.3m
- Luton: £19.1m
- Norfolk: £49.6m
- North East and North of Tyne: £163.5m
- North East Lincolnshire: £4.7m
- Nottingham City: £11.4m
- Nottinghamshire: £18.7m
- Oxfordshire: £12.7m
- Portsmouth: £48.3m
- Reading: £26.3m

- Stoke-on-Trent: £31.7m
  - Warrington: £16.2m
  - West Berkshire: £2.6m
  - West Midlands: £87.9m
  - West of England and North Somerset: £105.5m
  - West Sussex: £17.4m
  - West Yorkshire: £70m
- 3.2 The full value of our bid was £370 million, which suggests that even the successful authorities will be receiving far less than they asked for and will have to reduce their plans accordingly. It is not yet clear whether each LTA will be able to prioritise funding on the basis of their grant, or whether the funding is being made against specific projects within their BSIP.
- 3.3 We have asked for feedback on our bid from the Department for Transport (DfT) but have yet to receive a formal response.
- 3.4 Whilst we were not successful in this round, having a BSIP and the associated Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme in place will be essential for consideration for future Government funding.
4. Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme  
The Enhanced Partnership (EP) is a statutory partnership, arising from the BSIP, which sets out how we will work with our local bus operators and consists of a Plan and one or more Schemes. Besides being the mechanism to use BSIP funding it is also a requirement for funding from the Bus Recovery Grant.
- 4.1 Bus services are likely to undergo considerable change in the coming year as new travel patterns emerge and networks and timetables are adjusted accordingly. The EP requires operators to work with us when redefining their commercial network to make it sustainable.
- 4.2 Even without BSIP funding we believe that there are a number of elements of the Plan which we can deliver. We will progress these as we strive to improve the bus network for the benefit of both our passengers and the sustainability of the operators.
5. Alternative Funding Streams for Public Transport  
We are actively pursuing other funding streams, as they come available, and the EP will be essential to both the bidding process and the implementation of any successful applications.
- 5.1 Buses have an important role to play in Wiltshire as they encourage economic regeneration and development, help with carbon, pollution and congestion reduction, provide access to essential services for those who have no alternative transport means and “extend the range” of active travel journeys. We will work proactively with partners both internally and externally to raise the profile of the bus in these areas and apply for funding as and when it is available.
6. Pewsey Vale Rural Mobility Fund Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) Project

We have now appointed a Demand Responsive Transport Manager, who brings a vast amount of specialist knowledge to Wiltshire in DRT management.

6.1 A Public Engagement Survey is being prepared, and a number of software providers are demonstrating their booking and scheduling systems.

## 7. Supported Bus Services Fund

This Government funding (£671,161) was granted to Wiltshire to improve the provision of local bus services in its area in one or more of the following ways:

- to improve current local bus services - for instance increasing evening or weekend frequencies, or supporting additional seasonal services in tourist areas;
- to restore lost bus routes where most needed to ensure people have access to public transport services;
- to support new bus services, or extensions to current services, to access e.g. new housing, employment opportunities, healthcare facilities etc.

7.1 As reported to Environment Select in October 2021, we had been able to retain most of our bus network at that time and it was not necessary to use this funding to restore lost services and we sought ideas on how we could improve our bus services. A great number of useful suggestions were received, some of which we earmarked for this funding, some of which we moved to our BSIP aspiration for funding.

7.2 However, with the succession of Covid lockdowns, and severe driver shortages as things now open up again, it was not the right time to launch new services, so nothing progressed beyond the initial planning stage at that time.

7.3 Since February 2022, we have seen some commercial bus service de registrations and significantly increased costs on our tendered network. Passenger numbers are only now slowly recovering from Covid restrictions, forcing First West of England to reconsider their bus service in Wiltshire. As a result, they withdrew their commercial D1 service between Trowbridge and Salisbury, potentially leaving one of our key bus routes unserved and c70,000 passenger trips per year unsupported. We have been able to retain a service between Trowbridge and Warminster by contracting First West of England and between Warminster and Salisbury by contracting with South West Coaches. We have also seen significant increases in costs when tendering public transport in the north of the county.

7.4 We do not have funds within our revenue budget for the commercial de registrations, nor the significant increase in tender prices, so, in order to continue providing these services for 2022-23, the Supported Bus Services Fund has been used in its entirety and it will now not be possible to introduce new services. Clearly, this approach is not financially sustainable and during the course of 2022-23, plans will be established in order to bring expenditure back in line with budget.

## 8. Local Transport Plan 4

As work begins on Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) we will be ensuring that it reflects the evolving and developing role of the bus, along with the new legislative environment.

## Environmental impact

9. Wiltshire Council has declared a climate emergency and it will be imperative for the bus service to reflect the objectives of the Council's new climate strategy. Public transport, along with cycling and walking, plays a pivotal role in the reduction of carbon emissions through reduced car use and in turn improved air quality.

## Equality and diversity impact

10. The following protected characteristics have been identified in an Equality Evidence Analysis:
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Low Incomes
  - Rurality
  - People with no access to private transport
  - Military status
  - Pregnancy and Maternity
  - Race
  - Religion and Belief
  - Sex
  - Shift / Part-time workers
  - Carers
11. The first six characteristics are likely to be impacted greater than the rest and the following is a short summary for each of these six protected characteristics:
  - *Age* - Younger and older people are more reliant on bus services and less likely to have access to a car. Also, fewer young people now hold driving licences and we live in an increasingly 'ageing society'. Younger people need affordable bus services to enable them to take up opportunities in education and work, and to increase their independence. Research has shown that many older people place particular value on 'local' and 'daytime' travel and predominantly travel for shopping, to access key services (notably healthcare) or to visit family and friends. Both groups also benefit from the health benefits of using public transport through encouraging outside activity and mobility.
  - *Disability* - People with disabilities are less likely to drive and therefore could become marginalized from the wider community and more reliant on support services without independent travel options, such as supported bus services to provide them access to employment opportunities and essential services or, to visit friends and family. Disabled people are also likely to need more trips to GPs and hospitals for regular medical appointments.
  - *Low incomes* - People on low incomes are particularly reliant upon local public transport services and a lack of available and adequate services can be a significant barrier to accessing employment opportunities and essential services. Public transport can also provide health benefits (as

people walk more and drive less) which can be particularly beneficial for people from socio-economically deprived areas which typically have lower levels of health.

- *Rurality* - In rural areas, settlements are dispersed, and homes, jobs and services are scattered – access to everyday opportunities and services can therefore be challenging. Rural bus services can help combat social exclusion by enabling non-drivers to access shops, education, training, and essential services. They are also important for the local economy; small businesses in rural areas need good accessibility for their employees and rural buses can encourage visitors and tourists.
- *People with no access to private transport* - are particularly reliant upon local public transport services and a lack of available and adequate bus services can be a significant barrier to accessing employment opportunities and essential services.
- *Military Status* - Military personnel and their families are often located in camps in (semi) rural locations. Therefore, withdrawn or reduced supported bus services will reduce travel options to access essential services or visit friends and family. There is also an increased risk of social isolation.

### **Risk assessment**

12. Not applicable.

### **Financial implications**

13. Not applicable.

### **Legal implications**

14. Not applicable.

### **Options considered**

15. Not applicable.

### **Conclusion**

16. Members are invited to review this information report and note the findings made.

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### **Background papers**

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

None

### **Appendices**

None