

Sponsor: Strategic Director Communities and Place
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The National Bus Strategy - Commitment to a Derby Enhanced Partnership

Purpose

- 1.1 Government published a new National Bus Strategy in March 2021. This required all local authorities to commit to developing an Enhanced Partnership with local bus service operators by the end of June 2021.
- 1.2 The strategy document is clear that current and future discretionary payments to local authorities from 1 July 2021, will only be available to those who have committed to enhanced partnership development. Similar provisions apply to local bus operators.
- 1.3 Once committed to the process, Local Authorities will need to develop a 'Bus Service Improvement Plan' in partnership with local bus operators, which will need to include cross-boundary routes. This is required by the end of October 2021.
- 1.4 The Enhanced Partnerships are expected to be fully functioning by April 2022.

Recommendations

- 2.1 To submit a commitment to Government, by the end of June 2021, that the Council will develop an 'Enhanced Partnership' as required by the National Bus Strategy.
- 2.2 To approve the development of a 'Bus Service Improvement Plan' covering the Council's travel to work area.
- 2.3 To accept an initial Government grant of £100,000 capacity funding for developing local bus proposals as outlined in the National Bus Strategy.

Reasons

- 3.1 To comply with national policy and enable continued access to future national funding.
- 3.2 To enable working with bus operators and neighbouring local authorities to develop a Bus Service Improvement Plan to the required timescales

3.3 To comply with Financial Procure Rules.

Supporting Information

- 4.1 Government published the National Bus Strategy “Bus Back Better” in March 2021. This required local authorities to commit to developing an Enhanced Partnership with local bus service operators by the end of June 2021.

Detailed guidance is still to be published, but it is understood that a short proforma will need to be returned to the Department for Transport as confirmation.

- 4.2 The strategy document is clear that current and future discretionary payments to authorities from 1 July 2021, will only be available those authorities who have committed to developing Enhanced Partnerships and similar provisions will also apply to local bus operators.
- 4.3 As part of the development of the Enhanced Partnership, Local Authorities, working with bus operators, will have to develop a Bus Service Improvement Plan. This will need to cover the Derby travel to work area and include cross-boundary routes. While detailed guidance is awaited, it is expected that the Plan will consider a range of issues such as reliability, journey times and where bus priority is needed. The Plan must be completed by the end of October 2021 and then be updated annually.
- 4.4 The enhanced partnerships are expected to be fully functioning by April 2022.
- 4.5 The Government has allocated an initial capacity funding grant of £100,000 to each local authority requesting revenue funding towards the implementation of an Enhanced Partnership and the development of their Bus Service Improvement Plan. This funding is to be used specifically for the following purposes:
- recruitment of additional staff to undertake the work required
 - procurement of consultants to support the work required
 - training of new and existing staff; to boost their capabilities on relevant bus policy and delivery. The Government notes that it has an aim to see the development of longer-term in-house capabilities on bus issues across all Local Authorities.
 - other activities to support the development of Local Authority bus plans.

Public/stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 Detailed guidance is awaited on the Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan, but engagement and consultation of stakeholders and the public will form part of the development, including where any changes require statutory consultation.

Other options

6.1 Not applicable.

Financial and value for money issues

7.1 Government has committed to providing ongoing dedicated grant funding for Local Authorities who commit to developing Enhanced Partnerships to help them fund the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and to support Local Authorities in the development of local arrangements. An initial capacity funding grant of £100,000 has been awarded to support the implementation of the scheme and the development of the improvement plan.

Legal implications

8.1 Detailed guidance on the National Bus Strategy is due to be published shortly by Government. Legal officers will provide advice as the details become available.

Climate implications

9.1 The strategy document states the Government commitment to achieving an all zero-emission bus fleet in the future. It is reasonable to assume that the initiatives promoted by the National Bus Strategy will contribute to environmental sustainability, improved air quality and decarbonisation. Our local plan will reflect Derby's own climate change strategy and ambitions.

Other significant implications

10.1 No implications identified at this stage.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal	Olu Idowu, Head of Legal Services	12/05/2021
Finance	Amanda Fletcher, Head of Finance, Communities and Place	12/05/2021
Service Director(s)	Verna Bayliss, Director of Planning, Transport & Engineering	12/05/2021
Report sponsor	Rachel North, Strategic Director of Communities and Place	
Other(s)		

Background papers:	Bus back better - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
List of appendices:	None