

Non-key Decision Committee Report



PURPOSE: Non-key decision update report

COMMITTEE: Transport and Connectivity Committee

DATE: 12 September 2024

TITLE: Supported Bus Services Priorities Task and Finish Group

Officer presenting the report: Adam Crowther **Job title:** Head of City Transport

Committee Chair: Cllr Ed Plowden

Executive Director lead: John Smith: Executive Director for Growth & Regeneration

Purpose of Report:

To establish a member Task and Finish Group for Supported Bus Services, and associated Terms of Reference (ToR).

Evidence Base / Context

1. The commercial bus network is complemented by additional 'supported' bus services, procured and managed by the West of England Combined Authority (CA). These are funded through a levy of its constituent Councils.
2. One of the impacts of the Covid pandemic was a contraction of the bus network, including the cessation of several services, both commercial and supported. Passenger numbers are continuing to grow back to pre-pandemic numbers and developing a comprehensive bus network remains an essential part of our transport strategy.
3. In its budget setting for 2024/25 onwards, Bristol City Council agreed to allocate income generated from the Clean Air Zone for the purpose of supporting more bus services. This amounts to circa £4.7m of funding over 4 years commencing April 2024. This funding is in addition to the current budgeted allocation for supported services in the Levy of £1.32m per annum. No funding is expected to be spent in 2024/25.
4. The Task and Finish group will review the bus network, utilising existing data and information from the Combined Authority's AssessWest project, the adopted West of England Bus Strategy and the region's Bus Services Improvement Plan, to prioritise additional or enhanced bus services that would contribute to the aspiration in these documents and improved accessibility for residents in the city. The Combined Authority will undertake the procurement exercise working with BCC colleagues to procure these services, with an intended start date of April 2025. The intention would be to fund these services for a minimum 3-year period, to give an opportunity for these services to develop over this time and remove or reduce any ongoing financial liability.
5. To enable procurement and registration of bus services in time for the intended start in April 2025, agreement on services to tender will need to be reached by the start of November 2024 and then approval of the contracts to be awarded will be required by the middle of December 2024.
6. A wider variety of service option can be proposed initially and sent to tender with a decision made

when the tenders are returned on which ones to fund.

7. A committee decision paper will be brought forward for December committee to seek agreement to spend the funding and a delegation to appropriate decision makers will be required to decide what the funds are spent on when the tenders are returned. It is not possible in the timeframes available to agree the services to be funded after the tender return dates at a formal committee and meet the deadline for registering a service for April start.
8. Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group are appended to this report. Input is required as to the frequency and duration of meetings to inform the ToR.

Officer Recommendations:

1. That the Committee for Transport and Connectivity notes the report and further details supplied in Appendix A and approves the recommended approach and Terms of Reference for the Supported Bus Services Task and Finish Group.
2. That the Committee for Transport and Connectivity agree the appropriate decision makers for the delegated decision on which services to fund when tenders are returned so that this can be included in the committee decision paper.
3. That the Committee for Transport and Connectivity agree the frequency and duration of meetings to inform the ToR

Corporate Strategy alignment:

The development of a high quality bus network delivers benefits across all Corporate Strategy themes:

1. Children and Young People: It increases independence particularly in the young, as well as maintaining social inclusion for all and especially older people.
2. Economy and Skills: Improve economic and social equality, pursuing economic growth which includes everyone and making sure people have good access to good quality learning, decent jobs and homes they can afford.
3. Transport and Connectivity: Buses are a key mode for disadvantaged groups and therefore an improved bus network assists lower income groups with accessing the jobs market.
4. Transport and Connectivity: The Bus Strategy also proposes more links into deprived areas to link to key arterial routes.
5. Transport and Connectivity: make Bristol a joined-up city, linking up people with jobs and with each other.
6. Health, Care and Wellbeing: Help to tackle poverty by improving access to transport and employment.
7. Economy & Skills: Improved accessibility and better public transport will assist with enabling development and economic growth.
8. Environment and Sustainability: Better public transport will support the decarbonisation of the city.

City Benefits:

1. Improving the physical accessibility of public transport modes, and wider connectivity to jobs, education, and other opportunities across the city for all citizens.
2. Promoting the use of more sustainable travel including bus, walking, and cycling as preferential modes. Subsequently delivering better air quality by reducing the reliance on private vehicles, and improving the health and wellbeing of the population, and especially for those living with a pre-

existing health condition

Consultation Details:

1. The proposal will be developed with the Combined Authority, as transport authority with responsibility for bus operations.

Background Documents: None

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Further essential background information and detail Supported Bus Services Priorities Task and Finish group TOR.	YES
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