

**Forward Plan reference number:** FP/243/09/23

<b>Report title:</b> Zero Emission Bus Regional Area (ZEBRA) Funding Bid for Electric Buses in Basildon	
<b>Report to:</b> Cllr Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport.	
<b>Report author:</b> Mark Ash, Executive Director for Climate, Environment and Customer	
<b>Date:</b> 8 November 2023	<b>For:</b> Decision
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Basildon divisions	

## 1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex sets out our strategy for a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy; a high-quality environment; health, wellbeing and independence for all; and for making Essex a good place for children and families to grow.
- 1.2 A strong public transport network is a key enabler for all these strategic aims. It helps people access education, jobs, health services and shops, supporting our schools, colleges, high streets and local employment. It gives people an alternative to car travel, helping to reduce congestion and carbon emissions, and so contributing to our net zero carbon goals. It enables people to live independently and to access friends and family, supporting their health and wellbeing.
- 1.3 A zero emission bus fleet (either electric or hydrogen) will increase the already significant carbon reduction benefits of bus travel and improve air quality. In the Essex County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 – 2026 (BSIP) and Essex Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme 2022 – 2027 (EP) ECC proposed the Basildon Volt scheme as one of its five key bus transformation projects. The project involves the electrification of buses in Basildon. This report is to approve in principle the submission of a bid to the Department for Transport in line with commitments made in both the BSIP and EP.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 A bid is submitted to the Department for Transport Zero Emission Bus Regional Area Funding scheme for zero emission vehicles serving the Basildon area in line with the bidding guidance at appendix A.
- 2.2 The final detailed approval of the bid is delegated to the Executive Director for Climate, Environment and Customer in consultation with the Cabinet Member and the Executive Director, Corporate Services.

### **3 Background and Proposal**

- 3.1 In its Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 to 2026 ECC proposed five projects across the county to transform its bus network. This included a project known as the 'Basildon Volt' project to electrify bus services in Basildon. Unfortunately at that point ECC was not successful in securing funding.
- 3.2 ECC therefore included a commitment in its Enhanced Partnership with operators to continue to develop the five projects and to seek investment from DfT to fund those. DfT have now launched the ZEBRA2 funding pot and invited bids. This report asks the Cabinet to agree that a bid can be submitted.
- 3.3 The details of the bid are currently being worked up. The bid will seek funding to electrify buses in Basildon. What we can say at this stage is that the majority of the investment will come from the bus operator (Firstbus) and we will apply for grant funding to meet the balance. If we get funding ECC's role will be to pass the money to the bus operator. The bid guidance is at appendix A but will need to set out:
- the number of electric vehicles;
  - the routes they serve;
  - the charging infrastructure requirements.
- 3.4 The bid will also have to consider
- the impacts on the electricity supply grid;
  - the cost of the bid and the contribution from partners.
- 3.5 The deadline for bids to be submitted is 15 December 2023. It is proposed that the detailed bid itself will be approved by the Executive Director for Climate, Environment and Customer in consultation with the Executive Director Corporate Services.

### **4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions**

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision
- Enjoy life into old age
  - Provide an equal foundation for every child
  - Develop our County sustainably
  - Connect us to each other and the world
  - Share prosperity with everyone
- 4.2 Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030:
- the replacement of diesel buses with electric buses and a subsequent reduction in carbon emissions.

4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high quality environment
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

## 5 Options

### ***Do nothing (not recommended)***

- 5.1 If ECC do not bid for ZEBRA2 funding we will lose out on this opportunity for funding. This funding would help to speed up the replacement of diesel buses with electric in Essex. The scale of investment needed for vehicles and infrastructure is substantial. The service improvements and reduction in carbon will not be achieved. The development of a model for rolling out zero carbon buses elsewhere in Essex will not occur.

### ***Submit a funding bid (recommended)***

- 5.2 If ECC bid for ZEBRA2 funding the aim will be to secure funding for a number of routes – depending on the detailed terms of the bid. This would see the introduction of electric buses into the Essex network and the necessary supporting infrastructure. This would bring service improvements, air quality improvements and reduced carbon emissions. It would also provide a paradigm for the development of zero emission services elsewhere in Essex.

## 6 Issues for consideration

### 6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 The details of the bid are not known at this stage. The decision to bid has been delegated to the Executive Director in consultation with the Council's S151 officer and the financial implications will be considered at that stage.
- 6.1.2 The costs associated with the project will be funded by ZEBRA grant and First bus, there is no requirement for ECC to match fund.
- 6.1.3 ECC will be responsible for passporting the grant funding to the operator and will need to review the terms and condition to ensure they are appropriate.
- 6.1.4 The application guidance sets out *"Once approved, the size of the agreed funding will be fixed. Should cost increases occur, DfT will not provide additional funding and this will need to be accounted for within local budgets or from private investment."* Should ECC be awarded the grant, the terms of the agreement between ECC and First must clearly establish that First is responsible for any cost escalation.

## **6.2 Legal implications**

6.2.1 If we are successful in bidding will be necessary to have an agreement with the operator to protect the funding.

6.2.2 The bid will need to consider the statutory subsidy control implications involved in paying money directly to a named bus operator. This is being considered as part of the scheme.

## **7 Equality and Diversity Considerations**

7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3 The Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

## **8 List of Appendices**

Appendix A – ZEBRA2 Bidding Guidance  
Appendix B - ECIA

## **9 List of Background papers**

Essex County Council Bus Service Improvement Plan 2021 to 2026 (published)  
Essex Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme 2022 to 2027 (published)

<b>I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Councillor Tom Cunningham, Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport</b>	16 November 2023

**In consultation with:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Mark Ash, Executive Director for Climate, Environment and Customer</b>	8 November 2023
<b>Executive Director, Corporate Services (S151 Officer)</b>	8 November 2023
<b>Stephanie Mitchener on behalf of Nicole Wood</b>	
<b>Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer) Paul Turner</b>	1 November 2023