

**Forward Plan reference number:** FP/484/08/22

<b>Report title:</b> Annual review of the Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022	
<b>Report to:</b> Councillor Lee Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport.	
<b>Report author:</b> Paul Crick, Director, Highways and Transportation	
<b>Date:</b> 30 November 2022	<b>For:</b> Decision
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

## 1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 A strong bus network helps support everyone in Essex. It helps key workers get to work; children get to school; older people to access shops and healthcare; reduces congestion; improves air quality; and helps mitigate climate change. It supports diverse communities; brings people together; links families; and allows independent travel for those who don't drive. It supports our high streets; local employment; and those accessing training and looking for work. It is an important contributor to our drive to level up the county and address climate change.
- 1.2 This report asks the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport to approve the Annual Review of the Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for 2022 which we have been asked to produce by the Government as part of the Government's national bus strategy. The review summarises progress in implementing BSIP 2021 to 2026.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Agree to publish the Annual Review of the Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 as attached in Appendix A to this report.

## 3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 In March 2021 the Government launched its new National Bus Strategy, 'Bus Back Better'. It is designed to:
  - Recast the bus sector to allow it to not only recover from the impact of the Covid 19 crisis.
  - Reverse the long -term decline in bus passenger numbers.
  - Help meet national emission, pollution and health goals.
  - Help meet economic regeneration goals by reducing congestion.

- 3.2 Essex County Council (ECC) is the local transport authority (LTA) for Essex. This makes it responsible for delivering concessionary fares and for addressing market failure by commissioning bus routes.
- 3.3 'Bus Back Better' placed three main requirements on LTAs. These were:
- by 30 June 2021 each LTA issues a statement of intent to pursue one of two statutory routes provided to enhance the delivery of local bus networks: an Enhanced Partnership (EP) or Network Franchising.
  - To issue a BSIP by 31 October 2021 setting out each LTA's vision and timeframes for developing the local bus network in its area.
  - To publish an Enhanced Partnership Plan and at least one Enhanced Partnership scheme by April 2022
- 3.4 ECC met all three of these targets. Cabinet decided on 22 June 2021 to pursue an Enhanced Partnership approach for Essex. An Essex BSIP was published on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 and enter into a formal Enhanced Partnership was agreed from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.
- 3.5 The National Bus Strategy indicates that an LTAs council's performance in developing its strategy for improving bus services in its area will be taken into account by the Department for Transport in considering applications for both bus and all other transport funding. The BSIP sets out the ECC's assessment of the current state of its bus network; the opportunities; and risks; and also sets out its vision for the future and the strategy for delivery. Given the importance of the BSIP for future funding ECC considers it crucial that it has an ambitious BSIP to show the Department for Transport that ECC has strong ambitions and has schemes worthy of funding.
- 3.6 Bus Back Better also requires each LTA to publish an annual review of its BSIP, assessing the state of the bus market and setting out progress toward meeting its stated goals and targets by the end of November each year.
- 3.7 The document included as Appendix A to this report is the draft Essex BSIP Annual review. It covers:
- The current position of the commercial network, including patronage, congestion and traffic levels and changes to service levels.
- Changes to ECC's contracted bus network.
  - A summary of the progress made in delivering ECC's BSIP commitments, including the delivery of 12 comprehensive Area Reviews, the establishment of a county wide Enhanced Partnership with bus operators, progress on our transformational projects and an update progress toward reviewing ECC policy supporting the bus network.
- 3.8 The Review also assesses the ongoing impact of COVID 19 and the continuing barriers to growing the bus network in Essex.
- 3.9 The review does not alter the existing goals or aims of the BSIP and nor does it add any additional policy or financial commitments beyond those already

agreed for the Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 to 2026 in November 2021.

## **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
- Strengthen communities through participation
- Develop our County sustainably
- Connect us to each other and the world
- Share prosperity with everyone

4.2 This links to the emerging organisational strategy 'Everyone's Essex' which is expected to be adopted by the Council on 12 October 2021, in particular the strategic priority of High-Quality Environment and the following two aims:

- Net Zero: Ensuring that the Council significantly reduces its carbon footprint whilst also supporting an acceleration in the progress towards sustainable housing and energy, and active and alternative forms of travel across the county
- Transport and built environment: we will deliver a step change in sustainable travel across the county, by growing passenger transport and active travel and supporting the move towards net zero, climate resilient developments including our new garden communities, by delivering sustainable and healthy neighbourhoods for the future.

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**

### **Option 1 (recommended): Publish the BSIP Annual Review as in Appendix A**

5.1 Authorise the publication of the Annual review of the Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 to 2026 as set out in the document attached in Appendix A.

5.2 This will allow the County Council to meet its obligation under the National Bus Strategy to publish an annual update, set out the County Councils progress over the last year in meeting its goals and set out our aims for 2023/24.

5.3 This is the recommended option.

**Option 2 (not recommended): do nothing**

5.4 Do nothing. The BSIP review will not be published and Essex will not meet the expectations placed upon it by the national bus strategy. This could negatively impact the success of further funding bids to Department for Transport projects.

5.5 This is **not** the recommended option.

## **6 Issues for consideration**

### **6.1 Financial implications**

6.1.1 There are no financial implications to this paper as it requests that the Annual Bus Service Plan for 2022 be published as set out on Appendix A.

6.1.2 The publication of this annual review may not result in any additional financial commitment by the authority unless appropriate funding is provided.

### **6.2 Legal implications**

6.2.1 There are no significant legal implications arising from the publication of the BSIP Review 2022. Any measures considered or recommended for implementation as a result of the BSIP must be considered in line with applicable ECC duties as well as competition and state aid requirements.

## **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: Annual review of the Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 to 2026**

**Appendix B: The ECIA**

## 9 List of Background papers

### **The Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 to 2026**

The 'sign off' boxes below are deleted for cabinet reports but not for CMAs.

<b>I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.</b>	<b>02/12/2022</b>
<b>Councillor Lee Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport.</b>	

**In consultation with:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Mark Ash Executive Director for Climate, Environment and Customer</b>	<b>30 November 2022</b>
<b>Executive Director, Corporate Services (S151 Officer)</b>	<b>30 November 2022</b>
<b>Stephanie Mitchener (on behalf of Nicole Wood)</b>	<b>29 November 2022</b>
<b>Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)</b>	
<b>Paul Turner</b>	