

AGENDA ITEM 5

PSEG/10/21

Report title: Essex Enhanced Bus Partnership	
Report to: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
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County Divisions affected: All	

Introduction

1. [Bus Back Better](#), the Government's new national bus strategy was published in March 2021. It required local transport authorities to meet three commitments:
 - To make a statement of intent on either franchising or Enhanced Partnerships by June 2021
 - To publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan by the end of October 2021
 - To put an Enhanced Partnership in place (if that is the chosen route) by the end of March 2022.
2. ECC has met the first two requirements. It is now in the process of meeting the third and is currently out to [consultation](#) on the first proposed Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme for Essex. The EP Plan and Scheme is also attached at Annex A.

Action required

3. The Committee is asked to consider the proposed Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme and make any recommendations.

Everyone's Essex

4. Buses contribute to all four priorities in Everyone's Essex:
 - **the economy:** buses get people to work and training; to the shops and leisure facilities; and support local jobs – all without contributing to the growth limiting impacts of congestion;
 - **the environment:** buses help improve air quality by reducing emissions from traffic. Poor air quality is linked to a significant number of adverse health impacts.
 - **children and families:** buses get children to nursery, school and college; they get parents to work; support family days out; and link generations together.
 - **promoting health, care and wellbeing for all ages:** buses support younger and older people particularly to get out and about; to meet friends; have company and care; access health appointments; and be independent.

Background

5. Pre-Covid there were over 40 million journeys on the bus network in Essex every year. At its lowest that dropped to 12 million during the first lockdown. Buses bring a huge range of benefits to individuals and communities. They also have a key immediate role in mitigating air quality and climate change emissions.
6. Measures to return the bus network to previous levels of patronage and then grow it will benefit everyone. Essex County Council published their [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) in October. Enhanced Partnerships (background [here](#)) are a way for local authorities to work with operators and wider partners to improve bus services. They are expected to be the main mechanism to enable the delivery of Bus Service Improvement Plans.
7. Essex's first Enhanced Partnership focuses on:
 - commitments that will bring real benefits to passengers from their introduction in April;
 - commitments that fit with the current delivery timetable;
 - commitments that put future work on a firm footing.
8. The full list of commitments are set out in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme at Annex A.
9. The expectation is that this is the first of many Enhanced Partnership schemes – not least because we expect the 12 district level network reviews launched by the BSIP to each produce their own scheme.
10. An Enhanced Partnership has to complete a statutory process before it can be made:
 - Formal declaration of intent to pursue an Enhanced Partnership - complete
 - 28-day bus operator consultation – complete
 - Public consultation – ongoing
 - Second 28-day bus operator consultation – due January
 - Enhanced Partnership is made – due March Cabinet.

Next Steps

11. Public consultation finishes on 3 December.
12. We will then review feedback and discuss possible changes with bus operators.
13. There will then be a further 28-day statutory consultation with bus operators in January.
14. A final decision on the Enhanced Partnership will be taken at March Cabinet.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – draft Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme