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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN  
2023-2028 AND SOUTHEND-ON-SEA ENHANCED  
PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

**Southend on Sea Local Bus Forum**

Date: Thursday, 5th September, 2024

Time: 2.00 pm

Place: Jubilee Room, Civic Centre

Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

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**Confirmation of Minutes of the last meeting of the Forum**

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## **Minutes of Southend-on-Sea Local Bus Forum**

### **Inaugural Meeting**

**Date: Monday 4 September, 2023, 5pm**

**Location: Committee Room 1 (Jubilee Room – Civic Suite)**

**The meeting was in Hybrid format with some Members attending remotely**

### **Present:**

Councillor Kevin Buck (Southend-on-Sea City Council) (Chair)

Southend-on-Sea City Council: Richard Lumley

Arriva: Chris Burley (*attending remotely*)

First Essex: Jullian Elliott

Stephensons of Essex: Bill Hiron

Bus Users UK: Jennie Martin

Castle Point Borough Council: Maria Hennessy

Essex County Council: Helen Morris (*attending remotely*)

Essex Police: David Gardiner

SABUG (Southend Area Bus User Group): Peter Slattery

Transport Focus: Mike Bartram (*attending remotely*)

Secretariat: John Austin, Conor Jones

### **1 Introductions, Apologies for Absence, and Statement of Quoracy**

Apologies for absence: D Kudla (Rochford District Council), S Gloyne (Southend BID) and Councillor D Garston (Southend-on-Sea City Council)

### **2 Governance Arrangements, insofar as they affect the Local Bus Forum:**

A summary of the arrangements for the Enhanced Partnership (EP) (that was submitted to and passed by Cabinet at its January 2023 meeting) was given. It was explained that the Enhanced Partnership is a Legal Agreement governing the provision of bus services within the area of Southend-on-Sea City Council and it consists of a Plan and a Scheme. The EP is based fundamentally on Southend's Bus Service Improvement Plan, that was submitted to the DfT in October 2021. Governance of the EP takes the form of two separate bodies, the Southend Local Bus Forum (this Meeting) and the Southend Local Bus Board.

The Local Bus Board's primary function is to advise and agree on, and manage, the delivery of the EP Plan and Scheme. The Local Bus Forum's primary function is to set the strategic direction of the Enhanced Partnership. It has two formal roles: appointing the Chair of the Local Bus Board, and considering and making recommendations on any variations proposed by the Local Bus Board on the Enhanced Partnership Plan or Scheme.

The initial invitations to organisations to join the Local Bus Forum, as listed in the EP, were explained, as were the expectations of Forum members.

The Local Bus Forum will meet at least annually but may meet more frequently if, for instance, the Local Bus Board proposes a variation to the Enhanced Partnership Plan or Scheme.

### **3 Members of the Public Invited to Ask Questions or Make Comments on the Agenda Items**

A member of the public asked how the Council will spend the welcome, but limited, BSIP+ money that has recently been awarded by DfT in respect of Southend's Bus Service Improvement Plan, in the light of several current issues. These include the current cost-of-living crisis, the fact that the Council does not invest in any tendered bus services, there is low car ownership in parts (a quarter of Southend residents do not own a car), and also a changed environment following the pandemic.

It was explained that this will be a matter for the Local Bus Board to consider, and will be discussed at the initial meeting of the Board (which is planned for the end of September).

### **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

#### **4 Current Status of Enhanced Partnership and of Local Transport Board**

Since the Enhanced Partnership was passed by Cabinet in January 2023, to take effect from April 2023, a special BSIP Capacity grant from DfT has funded the appointment of a Public Transport Manager (J Austin) until end March 2025. Both the Local Bus Forum and the Local Bus Board are being set up, with this being the initial meeting of the Forum and the initial meeting of the Board being expected to be in September.

Issues that are expected will be discussed at the Board which include a) Evening services for some routes that do not have this, b) Buses on links that have been removed in the past (e.g. Carlton Avenue and Central Avenue / North Avenue), and c) digitalisation of the all-routes Octopus ticket (covering Castle Point and Rochford Districts, as well as Southend). It was acknowledged that buses are probably more likely to be used by lower-income residents and that the Forum should reflect this in its strategic direction.

It was noted that the way in which the funds can be spent is limited by DfT revenue grant conditions which must be spent by the end of determined time periods, and must be used for specific bus service or network improvements rather than, for instance, a general marketing campaign.

It was noted that the DfT was now being very active in supporting the process of taking forward BSIPs generally (and in related aspects, e.g. funding competitions such as ZEBRA). Guidance on revisions to the BSIP and on measuring performance against targets in the BSIP is expected. A revision to the BSIP will need to be both ambitious and realistic, taking account of the limitation of available funding but being creative in its consideration of funding opportunities.

### **ITEMS FOR DECISION**

#### **5 Setting the Strategic Direction of the Enhanced Partnership**

The 7 objectives of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (and hence of the Enhanced Partnership) are as follows:

1. Manage the highway network to improve the reliability of local bus services;
2. Make local bus journeys quicker, especially on key routes in Southend;
3. Improve the quality of bus stops and waiting facilities for all users of local bus services;
4. Deliver a more integrated public transport network that is easy for everyone to use;
5. Improve the quality and accessibility of bus service information through all media channels;
6. Improve the quality standards of local bus services, including reducing emissions;
7. Market and promote local bus services in a holistic manner.

The Forum's view was that the two first objectives of improving reliability and making local bus journeys quicker are of overwhelming importance and should therefore be the focus of the Enhanced Partnership's strategic direction.

It was pointed out that all the key bus corridors in Southend struggle with punctuality and that improving the reliability and journey time of bus services would make them both easier and more efficient to operate, but would also make them more attractive and thereby increase patronage. The focus of reliability improvements needs to be on quick wins in highway improvements.

Poor reliability leads to a whole generation of potential bus passengers being lost to the bus (and using the car instead), so is fundamental to the continuance and development of Southend's bus network. Development of an integrated bus network, through better interchange and waiting areas in the form of Mobility Hubs (which relate to Objectives 3 and 4) can help make the bus network more attractive but only when there is a route to the delivery of the fundamentals of reliability and faster bus travel on key corridors (as in Objectives 1 and 2).

Improvements to ticketing and fares help deliver a more integrated network: at the same time they can speed up boarding and hence contribute to improving reliability. However, the societal downsides of going cashless also need to be considered: it is important that the needs of all users are considered when the bus network is being reviewed. In this respect, the reintroduction of compulsory stops could help visually-impaired bus users.

This item of these Minutes will become the Report submitted to the Local Bus Board as the Local Bus Forum's guidance on the direction of the Enhanced Partnership.

## **6 Nomination of and voting on candidates for Chair of Southend Local Bus Board**

Jennie Martin MBE, Chair of Bus Users UK, offered herself as candidate for election as Chair of the Southend Local Bus Board for the next 12 months and was duly elected unanimously.

## **7 Nomination of and voting on any additional representatives from other groups to attend future Forum meetings**

Bus Users UK proposed that Campaign for Better Transport be invited to join the Local Bus Forum as a Member for future meetings. This proposal was voted on and received unanimous approval.

## **8 Date of First Meeting of Southend Local Bus Board**

The first Board meeting was proposed during the week commencing 25 September, the date and time were not confirmed in the meeting. The date and time of 29 September at 1400 were confirmed subsequently.

## **9 Date of next Annual Meeting of Southend Local Bus Forum – proposed for Wednesday 4 September 2024**

This was agreed. It will be communicated again nearer the time.

## **10 Any other Business**

Support offered by members of the Forum to help develop revisions to the BSIP and to assist in its execution through the Enhanced Partnership (e.g. in supporting any working groups that the Local Bus Board may choose to set up) was welcomed

The meeting concluded with thanks to the Forum members for their time and contributions

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**SOUTHEND-ON-SEA ENHANCED  
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**Local Bus Forum overview**

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The Enhanced Partnership is the Department Transport (DfT)-directed mechanism for delivering the Southend Bus Service Improvement Plan 2022 to 2027. The Southend Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) was produced in 2021 and was adopted by Southend-on-Sea City Council in that year.

The Enhanced Partnership was devised and consulted on during 2022 and adopted by Southend-on-Sea City Council's Cabinet in January 2023 to take effect from April 2023. It consists of two elements: an Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP), and an Enhanced Partnership Scheme which shows the detail and delivery of the Plan's execution.

The governance of the Enhanced Partnership comprises two separate bodies: the Southend Local Bus Board and the Southend Local Bus Forum. The Local Bus Board's primary function is to advise and agree on, and manage, the delivery of the EP Plan and Scheme.

The primary function of the Local Bus Forum - this meeting - is essentially to advise on the strategic direction and priorities of the Enhanced Partnership, which delivers the BSIP, and to set the context in which the Local Bus Board operates, by appointing the latter's Chair. It meets at least annually but can have additional meetings as required. It is not a body for advising on the detail of bus service changes but rather to advise on the overall direction and strategy of bus service improvements.

The Forum brings together representatives from a wide range of key stakeholder groups to review the progress of the BSIP and EPP. It may also recommend to the Board the priorities for improving the bus network that it should consider for the following year.

The Forum is responsible for advising the Board on the strategic direction of the EP, and may make recommendations to the Board about the priorities for improving the bus network that it should consider in the future.

The Forum was set up with membership including Southend-on-Sea City Council, the bus operators and the following stakeholder groups (including representatives of adjoining authorities). Initially these included Southend Area Bus User Group (SABUG), Bus Users UK, Essex County Council, Rochford District Council, Castle Point Borough Council, Transport Focus, Essex Police and Southend BID. Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) was voted onto the Forum at the Forum's first meeting.

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**Overview of Expenditure Plans for BSIP Phase 2 Funds**

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Southend-on-Sea City Council was awarded £479,250 by DfT for each of the years 2023/24 and 2024/25 in the BSIP Phase 2 settlement for English Local Transport Authorities. The amounts were awarded to the Council based on a formula approach and subject to the Council adhering to certain document delivery timescales required by the DfT.

While the Council appreciates the funding allocated to us, the amount awarded to the Council was considerably less than the amount requested from the DfT in the BSIP in 2021. In addition, the funding was for revenue expenditure only and was not to be spent on capital schemes.

There were, therefore, only certain elements in the BSIP that could be progressed using the DfT BSIP Phase 2 funding. Under these constraints, the Council has focused on certain parts of the BSIP in its general approach to spending the BSIP Phase 2 funding, this focus being as follows:

- **Move, where possible, towards a bus network which provides a more comprehensive service across the day;** by providing some services in the evening on routes where services would otherwise stop at the beginning of the evening (e.g. services 24, 29)
- **Reintroduce, where possible, services on sections of road where there is known to be demand** (and where, without a bus service, some disbenefit or hardship would exist); but where the demand is not currently at a level which would be commercially feasible for the operators to introduce without this funding (e.g. service 21A along Carlton Avenue, service 6 extension to Garon Park)
- **Enable the carrying out of tasks to maintain and improve the bus network** (e.g. by employment of a Public Transport Assistant to manage a programme of bus stop improvements)
- **Improve the visible integration of the Southend bus network** (development elements that are still being formulated)

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**Strategic Direction of Enhanced Partnership**

The Council has reviewed the Bus Service Improvement Plan in the light of procedural advice from the DfT. We have come to the view that the Vision for the Southend bus network should be unchanged from the one that was in the BSIP in 2021, and that the direction and focus of Improvements to that network should be the same as in the BSIP produced then.

This view was tested with certain stakeholder groups represented on the Local Bus Forum, who confirmed that they agreed with this general approach.

We therefore consider that the direction of the BSIP should remain as follows.

***Our vision is to make bus travel the priority travel choice for everyone in Southend, and by doing so making our communities greener and more prosperous***

And that the BSIP Objectives and EP Approach should remain as below.

<b>BSIP Objectives</b>	<b>EP Approach</b>
<b>1.</b> Improve the reliability of local buses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver bus priority signalling at major junctions in Southend</li> <li>• To review major corridors to identify solutions that will improve journey speeds and reliability of services</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b> Make bus journeys quicker, especially on the key routes into and out of Southend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver bus priority at major traffic signal junctions in Southend</li> <li>• To review major corridors to identify solutions that will improve journey speeds and reliability of services</li> <li>• To upgrade existing tickets to contactless and mobile payments, speeding up bus boarding times</li> </ul>
<b>3.</b> Improve the quality of local bus stops and waiting facilities for all users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver a series of Mobility Hubs across Southend to improve connections between buses, trains, walking, cycling, car clubs, and other forms of transport</li> <li>• To review major corridors to identify solutions that will improve journey speeds and reliability of services, as well as improving the quality of local stops</li> <li>• Ensure that all local bus stops meet minimum standards of accessibility and information</li> </ul>
<b>4.</b> Deliver a more integrated public transport network that is easier for people to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To deliver a series of Mobility Hubs across Southend to improve connections between buses, trains, walking, cycling, car clubs, and other forms of transport</li> <li>• To expand the current Octopus ticket to all operator mobile apps and contactless payment, and to be accepted on local rail services</li> <li>• To develop and deliver a single brand identity to be applied to all bus information, stops, and services.</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b> Improve the quality and accessibility of bus information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop and deliver a single brand identity to be applied to all bus information, stops, and services. Expand the range of media for static and real time information.</li> </ul>

<b>BSIP Objectives</b>	<b>EP Approach</b>
6. Improve the quality standards of local bus services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To retrofit existing buses in Southend to an improved emissions standard</li> <li>• To ensure that all new buses in Southend are low emission</li> </ul>
7. Market and promote local bus services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To develop and deliver a single brand identity to be applied to all bus information, stops, and services.</li> </ul>

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**Recommendations on Proposed Variations to Enhanced  
Partnership Scheme**

Due to the complexity in some aspects of project delivery there has been some slippage in project delivery and the Local Bus Board proposes the following variations to the Enhanced Partnership Scheme. We are therefore requesting a recommendation from the Local Bus Forum that the Variations below to the EP Scheme (to incorporate revised Delivery Dates) be approved.

<b>Action / Delivery</b>	<b>Original Delivery Date in EP Scheme</b>	<b>Proposed Variation to Delivery Date in EP Scheme</b>	<b>Reason for Change to Delivery Date</b>
To develop and Implement a Southend and South Essex bus brand	April 2024	October 2024	Delay in agreeing certain detail of arrangements
To develop and deliver a joint marketing campaign (between the Council and the Operators)	June 2023	October 2024	Considered inappropriate until the new brand is in place
Upgrade the existing Octopus ticket to contactless and mobile phone payments	July 2024	October 2024	Delay in agreeing detail of implementation
To implement a Bus Passenger Charter	July 2023	August 2024	Implementation in 2023 was considered inappropriate in relation to bus stop information improvement programme
To Identify options to promote value fares for Summer 2024	August 2024	August 2025	Delivery now is not appropriate in the context of the £2 Maximum Single Fare and the current uncertainty over national policy concerning its future

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**Nomination of and voting on candidates for Chair of Local  
Bus Board**

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The existing Chair of the Local Bus Board, Jennie Martin MBE, Chair of Bus Users UK, has confirmed her willingness to continue as Local Bus Board Chair for another year (until September 2025).

At the meeting of the Local Bus Board on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024 the members of the Board supported her candidature as Local Bus Board Chair for the year to September 2025.

Other candidates for the position of Local Bus Board Chair for the year to September 2025 may be proposed by Forum Members at the Forum meeting, the Secretariat having first been alerted to the impending nomination of such candidates by their proposer.

Unless deemed unsuitable for the role of Local Bus Board Chair (by virtue of not satisfying the formal independency conditions required of the Chair), such candidates will then have the opportunity to make their case to the Forum meeting for no longer than 3 minutes.

A vote on the candidates will then take place.

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**Nomination of and voting on any additional representatives  
from other groups to join the Forum as members**

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The Terms of Reference of the Forum allow members of the Forum to nominate additional representatives from other groups to join the Forum for future meetings. Any additional members would be subject to a vote of the Forum, requiring a majority for additional members to be confirmed. At the initial meeting of the Forum there was a proposal for the Campaign for Better Transport (CBT) to join the Forum, and the Forum then voted on this proposal which was passed.

At this Forum meeting Southend-on-Sea City Council will be proposing that the Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust join the Forum. It may be that a Forum member (or members) will also propose that other organisations be admitted to membership of the Forum. In all such cases a vote of the Forum members will take place at the meeting.

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