

Cllr Ron Woodley, Cabinet Member for  
Transport, Asset Management and Inward  
Investment.

Councillors Ian Gilbert, Carole Mulronev and  
Tony Cox

Our ref: AE/JB/BSIP

Your ref:

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021

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Dear Councillors,

### **Standing Order 46: Bus Service Improvement Plan and publication of the Draft Enhanced Partnership**

I write to you as Executive Director for Neighbourhoods and Environment. Unfortunately, due tragic events last Friday 15 October and the postponement of Council business there is a very tight timescale to adhere to as laid down from the Department for Transport.

As you will be aware the Council is required by the Department for Transport (DfT) under the National Bus Strategy document called *Bus Back Better* to publish a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which is an action plan and bidding document to make improvements to local bus services. Our BSIP contains proposals for nearly £69 million in improvements over 5 years to improve the local bus network. This includes proposals to:

1. **Improve our key bus corridors** by improving journey times, reliability, and whole experience of using each corridor.
2. **Improve existing bus services** by providing better evening and weekend services, maintaining service frequencies, and standardising timetables.
3. **Improve cross-town connectivity** by providing new services linking Leigh-on-Sea to Southend Airport (via Eastwood), Chalkwell to Southend Airport (via Southend Hospital), and Southend Airport to Thorpe Bay and Shoeburyness.
4. **Improve ticketing and fares** by upgrading the existing all-operator Octopus ticket, and trialling a £1.50 flat fare.
5. **Better marketing and promotion of local buses** through a single brand identity, agreed with operators and Essex County Council.
6. **Improving existing buses** through audio-visual announcements of stops, and retrofitting buses to be lower emissions.

These improvements will be funded through the Department for Transport. It should be stressed there will be no obligation on the Council nor the bus operators to deliver the plans included in the BSIP without this funding in place.

Throughout the development of this BSIP we have engaged with local bus operators, Councillors, and representatives of community groups to identify schemes to include in the BSIP. Many of the plans of the BSIP reflect the priorities shared and the schemes suggested, including a new service between Leigh-on-Sea and Southend Airport via Eastwood, making buses more affordable through a flat fare, and improving journey times and reliability of buses along key corridors. The engagement of all parties has been positive and constructive, with a high degree of enthusiasm to make buses better.

Additionally, the Council is required to enter an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with local bus operators to improve local bus services. This partnership, which is a formal legal document agreed between the Council and the bus operators, will set out how both the Council and local bus operators will work together to improve all aspects of local bus services – which has the potential to include things like bus stop infrastructure, service frequencies, integrated ticketing, and bus service priority on the highway.

To begin this process, we are required to publish a Draft Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme for formal consultation with bus operators and with the public more generally. The Draft Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme has been developed, and contains the following as required under the Bus Services Act 2017:

- The aims and objectives of the Enhanced Partnership, which are the aims and objectives of the Bus Service Improvement Plan;
- Full lists of the commitments to be made by both the Council and bus operators, as reflected in the Bus Service Improvement Plan;
- Details on the decision-making structure of the Enhanced Partnership, which will consist of:
  - The Local Bus Forum, which will set the strategic direction and priorities of the partnership, and;
  - The Local Bus Board, which will make operational decisions for the Partnership to carry out its work to improve local buses.

At this stage, we are only publishing the Draft Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme for consultation. As well as being made available on the Council's website and Your Say Southend, this document will also be sent to all local bus operators for their comments.

A final matter to consider is that the Council is required to meet the following deadlines by DfT.

All Local Transport Authorities must submit a BSIP by **31 October 2021** and must enter an Enhanced Partnership with the major bus operators by **31 March 2022**.

A failure to do so will mean that the Council will be unable to access future transport funding to improve bus service provision in the Borough for its' residents, businesses and visitors, and it will also significantly affect its ability to attract funding for other major transport improvements.

Both the BSIP and the EP Plan and Scheme were submitted to the Special Cabinet Meeting on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021, and to the Place Scrutiny Committee on the same day. Due

to the tragic events of Friday 15<sup>th</sup> October and the subsequent cancellation of these meetings, it is necessary for us to continue our course of action using S.O.46,

Consequently, I propose to take the following action:

- Approve the Bus Service Improvement Plan document, to meet the Department for Transport requirement for an adopted plan by 31 October 2021.
- Approve the draft Enhanced Partnership (EP) for public consultation to progress the work required on the EP for a final version to be adopted by 31 March 2022.
- In consultation with the Cabinet Member for Transport, Asset Management and Inward Investment, to:
  - make amendments to the draft Enhanced Partnership prior to consultation; and
  - take all necessary steps to ensure compliance with the relevant statutory processes and procedures to undertake the consultation.

I should be grateful if you would confirm, pursuant to S.O.46, that you concur with my proposed action by signing the endorsement at the foot of this letter.

Yours sincerely,



**ANNA EASTGATE**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOODS & ENVIRONMENT**

I concur with the proposed action set out above.

Signed ..... Date .....  
Councillor Ron Woodley, Cabinet Member for Transport, Asset Management and Inward Investment

In the circumstances, the other Group Leaders are also asked to sign the endorsement to indicate that they concur with the proposed action

Signed ..... Date .....  
Councillor Ian Gilbert, Leader of the Council and Leader of the Labour Group.

Signed ..... Date .....  
Councillor Carole Mulrone, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group.

Signed ..... Date .....  
Councillor Tony Cox, Leader of the Conservative Group.