

Environment, Communities & Fire Select Committee

13 June 2018

Bus Strategy 2018-2026

Report by Executive Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Environment and Director of Highways and Transport

Summary

This report presents the draft West Sussex Bus Strategy, which covers the period 2018 to 2026. The Bus Strategy sets out West Sussex County Council's approach to local bus and community transport services, over the next eight years.

The Bus Strategy will align with the West Sussex Plan 2017-2022 and determine which opportunities within the Bus Services Act 2017 are supported. The draft Bus Strategy outlines the priorities for future funding for both services and infrastructure in light of various challenges.

The work on the Bus Strategy is being informed by an Executive Member Task and Finish Group, as well as an 8 week public consultation on the proposed priorities, running from April to early June 2018. The results of the consultation are also considered in this report.

The focus for scrutiny

The Committee is asked to consider the draft Bus Strategy, in particular:

- the ambitions and priorities arising from those ambitions,
- if the opportunities in the Bus Services Act 2017 have been assessed appropriately.
- the interim results from the public consultation on the draft strategy

Recommendation

- (1) The Committee is asked for their feedback as part of the consultation on the draft Bus Strategy

Proposal

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Approximately 80% of local bus services in West Sussex are operated on a fully commercial basis by bus companies through a de-regulated market since 1986.

- 1.2 The remaining 20% are where the Council has chosen to step in and contract socially necessary supported bus services where they are not commercially viable. The Council also provides grants for some local community transport schemes for residents unable to use conventional bus services or where they don't operate. In addition, the Council has duties to fund school transport for eligible children as well as off peak bus travel for older and disabled people.
- 1.3 The Council has developed relationships with the bus operators supporting the continued sustainability of commercial bus services that provide millions of passenger journeys each year. The supported services and funding of school travel also helps sustain the commercial network.
- 1.4 The Council acts as a catalyst working with developers and bus companies to enable sustainable bus services serves new developments as an alternative to increased car use.
- 1.5 The challenges faced across West Sussex are increased congestion affecting commercial services mainly along the coast and in the towns in the north of the county (Crawley, Horsham and East Grinstead) and a lack of commercial viability for conventional bus services in rural areas.
- 1.6 The Bus Strategy is needed to ensure the future approach to supporting bus and community transport aligns with the West Sussex Plan 2017-2022 that sets out the direction and vision of the County Council.
- 1.7 The Bus Strategy is being drafted in the context of the Bus Services Act 2017 that outlines opportunities for transport authorities to work with bus companies and other organisations in different ways to deliver better services for residents

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The Bus Strategy will support the West Sussex Transport Plan 2011- 26 that outlines the County Council's broader transport direction and aspirations.
- 2.2 The Bus Strategy sits alongside the West Sussex Walking and Cycling Strategy and will be used to consider funding priorities for bus and community transport services and infrastructure solutions in the context of future developments across the county.
- 2.3 The draft Bus Strategy sets out a vision with the proposal that West Sussex will be a place where:
 - (1) Bus services are punctual, reliable and accessible
 - (2) Bus users can plan, book and pay for travel using the latest technology
 - (3) Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner
 - (4) Bus services allow older people to continue to live independently
 - (5) Bus operators and their services give a consistently good level of quality for users across the county
 - (6) Bus travel is affordable for users

- (7) Air Quality is better as a consequence of investment in cleaner buses as opposed to cars
- 2.4 In order to achieve this vision the County Council has the following ambitions being:
 - (1) Give buses priority over other travel modes when congestion occurs
 - (2) Implement cross ticketing and easy payment systems
 - (3) Use the latest clean engine technology
 - (4) Prioritise investment in good accessible bus infrastructure for bus users
 - (5) Work with property developers to design developments to incorporate buses as a priority with suitable infrastructure
 - (6) Work with all tiers of Local Government in seeking funding for prioritised local services
 - (7) Explore whether it makes sense to use our own vehicles to provide services working with Community Transport where appropriate
 - (8) Work with bus operators to provide affordable fares for young people
- 2.5 It is proposed to achieve the ambition through powers within the Bus Services Act 2017 to enter into area-based Enhanced Partnerships with bus and community transport operators, district/borough councils and other key local stakeholders. In addition, work with Total Transport partners (these being Surrey and East Sussex County Councils, Brighton and Hove City Council and the NHS) will continue to develop joined up solutions.
- 2.6 The draft Bus Strategy is included as Appendix A.
- 2.7 It is proposed that a Key Decision will be taken by the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Highways on the Bus Strategy and any changes to supported bus services and community transport funding in January 2019.

3. Resources

- 3.1 Once the Strategy has been agreed new ways of working will commence across areas of the county determining need and to form the Enhanced Partnerships with key stakeholders. This will involve officers from Highways and Transport, as well as the Communities directorates.
- 3.2 A review of all supported bus services and community transport will be undertaken to prioritise available funding that meets the West Sussex Plan in autumn 2018. This will be undertaken by the Cabinet Member's Executive Bus Task and Finish Group, which will also assess alternative approaches to delivering bus services within local communities.
- 3.3 A public consultation will be undertaken on any proposed changes to supported services that will include an impact assessment before the Key Decision will be taken.
- 3.4 Any arising planned changes to supported services will take place in 2019/20.
- 3.5 The public transport support budget for 2018/19 is:

	£m
Payments to bus operators and database management	2.562
Income	1.563
Net cost of service	0.999

Factors taken into account

4. Issues for consideration by the Select Committee

- The Committee is asked to review the ambitions within the draft Bus Strategy set out in 2.3 and the priorities arising from them set out in 2.4.
- The Committee is asked to consider if the ambitions and priorities align with the direction and vision in the West Sussex Plan 2017-2022.
- The Committee is asked to consider if the opportunities in the Bus Services Act 2017 have been assessed appropriately. Information on the Act can be found at [Bus Services Act 2017: new powers and opportunities - GOV.UK](#)
- The Committee is asked to consider the interim report from a public consultation that was undertaken just prior to the meeting (see 5.1).

5. Consultation

- 5.1 An 8 week public consultation was undertaken ending 6 June 2018. The consultation was widely advertised through press releases, posters and leaflets on local buses, through schools and parish councils and various other media.
- 5.2 Members have been consulted through receiving the questionnaire, as well as the Select Committee via this report.
- 5.3 External consultees have included district/borough councils, town and parish councils, schools, bus and community transport companies and other partners.
- 5.4 The wider public consultation included bus and non-bus users.
- 5.5 Responses to the consultation could be made either electronically or via paper based questionnaires to ensure as many were received as possible.
- 5.6 At the time of committee papers being circulated the consultation had not closed but an interim report is included as Appendix B for the Committee to consider.
- 5.7 A further public consultation will be undertaken to analyse impacts of any service changes as a consequence of the Bus Strategy will be undertaken in September/October 2018. The outputs of that consultation will be scrutinised along with the final draft of the Bus Strategy by the Committee at its meeting in December 2018 prior to the Key Decision in January 2019.

6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 The Bus Strategy does not impose additional risk on the Council. It is expected that the pro-active approach to reviewing existing and designing new bus and community transport through community engagement and Enhanced Partnerships will reduce the risk to the Council. In addition, the alignment of the Bus Strategy with other plans and strategies, such as the Walking and Cycling Strategy, should help to reduce risk and in particular reputational risk to the Council.
- 6.2 With the current financial climate, continuing to re-focus priorities for future funding will reduce the risk of short term reductions in services through the work of the partnerships.
- 6.3 The Bus Strategy will help the Council to ensure that future developments are designed and built to accommodate bus services and infrastructure alongside other sustainable travel solutions to enhance health and well-being of residents and to enhance the local economy.

7. Other Options Considered

- 7.1 The 'do nothing' approach, continuing to use existing scoring criteria used since 2001 could sustain a decline of services in some areas where it is most needed.
- 7.2 The move to a franchising model as found in London was considered unsustainable due to need and cost to deliver. Rural solutions linked into commercial services can be achieved without the move to this model through Enhanced Partnerships giving greater local accountability.

8. Equality Duty

- 8.1 **Equality Act.** An Equalities Impact Assessment will be finalised once the consultation has completed and will form part of the formal decision report to adopt the Bus Strategy in summer 2018. Bus and community transport networks are designed based on both need and commercial viability. The Council has the power to intervene where the commercial network fails. Consideration of the available solutions takes into account the needs of all users.

9. Social Value

- 9.1 The Bus Strategy is a strategic document that deals with the long term ambitions and priorities for bus and community transport services in West Sussex and does not cover more detailed commissioning decisions. Therefore no social value implications have been identified.

10. Crime and Disorder Implications

- 10.1 None identified

11. Human Rights Implications

11.1 None identified

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Appendices:

Appendix A - Draft Bus Strategy

Appendix B – Public Consultation Interim Report – To be tabled at meeting

Background Papers

[Bus Services Act 2017: new powers and opportunities - GOV.UK](#)