

APPENDIX A

WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL BUS STRATEGY 2018 - 2026

1 Introduction

Buses play an important role in many lives across West Sussex providing travel for thousands of residents and visitors in the county. They play a vital role in reducing the social isolation for older, disabled and other vulnerable people who, without local bus or community bus services, would not be able to get out and about seeing friends and family and accessing important services. Research has proven that the costs to society if these services couldn't be accessed would be extreme and have a large impact on the local economy.

Modal shift from private cars to buses reduces traffic congestion improving journey reliability, thereby reducing carbon emissions linked to climate change. Nearly 27 million passenger journeys are carried out on the bus network across West Sussex each year with 85% of the bus mileage delivered on a fully commercial basis by local bus operators.

Bus services have changed dramatically since they were deregulated in 1986 (footnote) bringing both the benefit of commercial investment and the challenge of public sector support, and it has been some time since we last reviewed our approach.

Bus patronage has risen in West Sussex with large scale commercial investment by national bus companies alongside local authority investment in infrastructure. The relationship between the bus companies and the County Council is seen as very positive.

West Sussex has an aging population with a higher than average number of residents living on the coast. Many of these residents are entitled to free off-peak bus travel that has led to a 'second peak' after 9.30am. This has a positive impact on these residents' lives and helps to alleviate social isolation and loneliness.

1.1 The need for this Strategy

The purpose of this document is:

- To clearly state the County Council's aims and objectives for local buses and community bus transport between 2018 and 2026
- To determine the County Council's priorities for funding, reflecting its overall passenger transport aspirations
- To provide guidance in support of prioritising bus infrastructure in new developments
- To provide a framework through which local interest and community groups can assist in the development of passenger transport improvements
- To support interested parties in securing additional funding where available
- To provide fit-for-purpose services and infrastructure supporting those services
- To determine which opportunities within the Bus Services Act 2017 are supported

This strategy explains how the County Council will prioritise funding and support for local buses and community transport. This may be direct funding for non-commercial services, investment in infrastructure, promotion of the bus and

community transport network and use of internal resources where the market cannot provide a sustainable service.

In addition, it will outline the County Council's approach to the Bus Services Act 2017, the Total Transport Initiative and the wider challenges presented by ongoing pressures on local authority funding.

1.2 Strategic Context

The West Sussex Plan sets out how we at the County Council will shape our services during 2017-2022.

The West Sussex Plan explains how we will focus on:

- Giving children and young people the best start in life
- Ensuring West Sussex is a prosperous place
- Communities will be strong, safe and sustainable
- We will support you in later life to remain independent
- We will be a council that works for our communities

The West Sussex Plan contains our vision for West Sussex and what we are trying to achieve for our residents and for the County. This bus review has been undertaken to ensure we align with those principles to take us forward.

This review of our approach to buses also supports the West Sussex Transport Plan 2011 – 2026 objectives. The Transport Plan includes four key priorities that guide our approach to maintaining, managing and investing in transport, and meeting the main objective of improving quality of life for the people of West Sussex:

- Promoting economic growth
- Tackling climate change/air quality issues
- Providing access to services, employment and housing
- Improving safety, security and health

1.3 What will be achieved?

West Sussex will be a place where:

1. Bus services¹ 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

This means we will:

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

¹ Includes conventional and community local bus services operating to a published timetable as well as demand responsive bus services operated by WSCC and community transport organisations

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 Discussion

To achieve the future state as outlined in the place statements above (see 1.3) we have to analyse the current state and identify the gaps. From that we can see what the challenges are and how the Bus Services Act gives us opportunities to close the gap.

2.1 GAP analysis

The current ways the County Council supports bus and community transport are outlined in Appendix 1. In summary funding is provided for:

- Conventional bus services that are not commercially viable but are deemed socially necessary, meaning a reasonable proportion of residents may become socially isolated if they were not available.
- Community Transport schemes who can apply for grants from the Accessible Transport Forum. This includes for Community Bus Services that are open to the public.
- To reimburse bus companies for revenue they forego by providing free off peak bus travel for older people and disabled people at any time.
- School transport via season tickets on commercial and supported bus services
- Developer (Section 106) funding is used to pump prime new services and to develop local bus infrastructure

The County Council also coordinates road side bus infrastructure such as bus stops and bus stands. It liaises with District/Borough Councils on the delivery of bus shelters and coordinates provision of Real Time Passenger Information screens throughout the county.

Analysis of the place based statements in 1.3 and especially what we will do helps us to identify the gaps between that 'future state' and the current state' to enable us to determine what needs to be tackled.

2.2 Challenges

The challenges are:

1. Bus service punctuality is being impacted by congestion - the County Council has proactively tackled urban congestion through major schemes (such as Fastway in Crawley²). However, most work has been to prioritise buses at junctions through signals linked to transmitters fitted to the buses. The downside is that the buses still have to sit in the traffic until they reach the

² Fastway was a major scheme including a guided bus way constructed by WSCC to allow buses to be separated from traffic. Buses were also prioritised at junctions and roundabouts through signalling improvements leading to a step change in bus services. The local bus company Metrobus introduced new buses and put on high frequency services for the town and Gatwick Airport as the main local employment location

traffic signals. Congestion continues to grow in most of the urban areas where commercial bus services operate more successfully.

2. To improve public transport cross ticketing and easy payment systems – the Discovery ticket covers most of the South East facilitated by a number of councils. However, take up is small and operators prefer to push their own products. Take-up of the BusPlus ticket product for bus/rail use is patchy. Take-up in some towns such as Crawley is good. We need to challenge residents' views of their local bus services and use of them to get to the train station. What is needed are products that the public recognise and are attractively priced. In addition, technology has made great advances for passengers. However, the application of easy payments and bus pass solutions isn't universal. Contactless payments might be available via larger operators but not the smaller firms who provide valuable in-filling bus services. Cross ticketing and easy payment solutions will need to be easy to use and straightforward for as many user types as possible to promote use of sustainable travel modes such as bus and rail. The County Council has much to gain from working across the industry to gain good quality information about bus use as well.
3. To put buses at the forefront in use of clean technology – buses have a reputation of being high polluters when in fact they can be lower than cars based on a per passenger calculation, especially with the latest Euro 6 engines. However, there remain a large number of older vehicles used to cover secondary services and school transport that do produce high amounts of pollutants. We need to work with the bus and coach operators to replace or retrofit their vehicles to reduce this. There is more to be done together to get the message to our residents that choosing a clean bus contributes to improved air quality leading to better life outcomes. In addition, new technology such as electric and hybrid vehicles will be explored as well as the required additional generating capacity to support them. The County Council can seek to utilise its own supplies through the Sussex Energy tariff and solar farm electricity generation initiatives.
4. To improve journey experience by prioritising investment in modern suitable bus infrastructure – where partners have done this there have been step changes in bus use (such as in Crawley). We are always competing with other road users, many of whom prefer to use the car for their travel needs. Buses have a large part to play so there is the need to convince hearts and minds of both users and funders to prioritise spending as an investment in the network. Bus users welcome the benefits of features such as WIFI whilst travelling that could be enhanced across more services.
5. To ensure the design of new developments incorporates buses as a priority – much more can be done across the County Council and with our district/borough council partners to ensure new developments are designed with the bus at its centre along with walking and cycling. Too many developments have been built with access and facilities for bus use as a secondary consideration. We want developers to promote greater bus use by new residents.
6. Funding pressures mean that we will have to prioritise funding for bus services that contribute to the West Sussex Plan – requiring changes in the criteria used to determine bus support and grant funding for community transport. Rural access is a growing issue with transport solutions being expensive and sometimes difficult to achieve.
7. Public sector funding varies across West Sussex – by working with other public sector partners such as district/borough/parish and town councils, as well as the NHS, we want to provide equitable funding for services across West Sussex.
8. Young people can struggle to access their local services such as learning and work opportunities. The cost of public transport can be a barrier. Therefore we

will concentrate on working with partners to seek reduced fares and other solutions.

2.3 Opportunities

The Bus Services Act 2017

The basis of the Act is to give local authorities a new toolkit to enable improvements to be made to bus services in their areas. It provides a number of options (tools) that can be adopted including:

- Strengthened arrangements for partnership working between bus operators and local authorities (LA's) in England, introducing new Advanced Quality and Enhanced Partnership schemes;
- Bus franchising powers to replace previous Quality Contract Schemes;
- Modernised ticketing legislation and
- Powers necessary for a step change in the information available to passengers through audio and visual on-board information and through the provisions of open data on timetable, fares and bus services arrival times (in England).

Further detail of the opportunities within the Act can be found at Appendix 2.

Of interest to us are the potential benefits from Enhanced Partnerships and Advanced Ticketing Schemes. Enhanced Partnerships present greater opportunities than Advanced Ticketing Schemes.

The Act can be used to achieve three main categories of outcomes:

- Better Journeys
- Better Places
- Better Value

An Enhanced Partnership (EP) is an agreement between a local transport authority (such as the County Council) and the majority of local bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. It includes a clear vision of the improvements that the EP is aiming for (known as an EP plan) and the accompanying actions to achieve them.³

An EP Scheme can include vehicle specifications, branding, payment methods, ticketing structure, real-time information requirements, frequency of services and timetables amongst others. It also provides more benefits than ticketing schemes as shown in the table below:

Can a requirement be put on bus operators to:	Ticketing schemes	Enhanced Partnership
Sell and accept a multi-operator or multi-modal ticket (including in a specific format, such as on a smart card?)	✓	✓
Market particular tickets in a certain way (including promoting multi-operator tickets not just their own)	✗	✓

³ The Bus Services Act 2017 – New powers and opportunities OGL Crown copyright 2017

tickets)?		
Set all their tickets and fares on a standard set of 'zones' that applies to all operators?	x	✓
Follow common ticket rules for their own tickets (such as a standard length of 'period' tickets or age to qualify for a youth concession if offered)?	✓	✓
Sell or accept any ticket on a particular technology (such as a smart card)?	✓	✓
Charge a set price for a multi-operator ticket?	x	✓
Charge a set price for their own, single-operator tickets?	x	x

The Act does give LAs greater powers to determine where bus services run, when, fares and branding via Franchising. Bus services in London are run via a franchising model with all services effectively supported by the London Mayor on behalf of the city through Transport for London. However, this model requires large scale investment that the County Council cannot afford at this time and there is no appetite from bus companies as they lose the ability to run services where they want commercially. It would effectively mean the large commercial bus network would be dismantled. In addition the County Council would have to seek the permission of the Secretary of State. Therefore, the option of franchising is not being pursued as it is believed the likelihood of meeting the challenges will be achieved through new Enhanced Partnerships with the local bus operators, district/borough councils and other key stakeholders such as the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the NHS.

Community Transport

West Sussex has many local community transport groups and schemes operating in local communities. However, many choose to operate locally as they have been developed by local residents to meet a local need. Some groups have grown to cover wider areas and tend to provide more services such as minibus operations, be they demand responsive or timetabled bus services.

There are seven community bus schemes operating weekly services from villages to shops in larger towns for residents who don't have a local accessible conventional bus or train service. These services provide a valuable link to those communities but rely on the goodwill of volunteers to sustain the service. Many older people rely on these services, travelling using their free bus pass.

Other larger community transport groups operate demand responsive services in both minibuses and cars to vital public services. Some use volunteers and others have paid staff with the latter often competing for County Council school and day service transport contracts to support their wider service.

Community transport often leads a fragile existence in West Sussex, competing for local authority grant funding and contracts. However, providers deliver valuable services that greatly contribute to the West Sussex Plan. A further challenge for

them is that minibus licensing is open to refreshed guidance from Government that could have a negative impact on their cost base.

We will work to have a more coordinated approach to community transport across all the public sector partners (including County, district/borough councils and the NHS). Whilst supermarkets sometimes contract local bus companies to provide shopping bus services for local communities, they generally don't work with local community transport providers. We will start a dialogue with the supermarket companies about this, as we believe they should seek to improve their corporate social responsibilities by working with local community transport providers.

Currently community transport groups can apply for grants in various ways. The mainstay for the larger groups is the annual revenue grants from the West Sussex Forum for Accessible Transport. In addition, the groups and smaller operators will seek funding from various sources including district/borough and town/parish councils. We have the opportunity to review this with the partners to provide a coordinated approach across the County.

Total Transport

The Government awarded top tier councils funding to help them deliver change to improve passenger transport to meet the challenges they face. It was recognised that transport can be fragmented, particularly impacting rural areas with a variety of public sector funded transport services that cater for a range of transport needs. These included:

- Non-emergency patient transport
- Adult social care transport
- School bus services
- Community transport services and
- Subsidised local bus services

The County Council was a partner to a consortium of local councils including Surrey County Council and East Sussex County Council that bid for funding. They were successful in being awarded £490,000 for a number of initiatives across the tri-county area. The funds were passed to Surrey County Council who led the bid for the partners. The partners worked with Brighton and Hove City Council and other partners to understand the value of community transport, sought closer working with the NHS and established joint contractual approaches to supported conventional and school transport. However, further work is needed to realise the potential of close partnership. These areas feed into the challenges and opportunities outlined below.

The partners have all expressed a keenness to carry on the work together, having joint procurement solutions already in place. The opportunity is to take this work forward on bus and community transport services to the benefit of all parties. This should be formalised and concentrate on cross county solutions. The pooling of funds should be fully explored.

2.4 Challenges and Opportunities

The following table outlines the main challenges and opportunities in respect of buses and bus travel in West Sussex.

West Sussex will be a place where:	Challenge (see 2.2)	Opportunity
<p>Bus services are punctual, reliable and accessible</p> <p>Bus operators and their services give a consistently good level of quality for users across the county</p> <p>Air Quality is better as a consequence of investment in cleaner buses as opposed to cars</p>	<p>1.How to tackle congestion to improve bus service punctuality</p>	<p>1. Ensure all plans and solutions to improve traffic congestion prioritise buses along with other sustainable travel modes</p> <p>2. Complete Road Space Audits in towns to maximise access for bus services</p> <p>3. Work with bus operators to share bus GPS data to see where congestion occurs</p> <p>4. Identify opportunities for bus lanes</p>
<p>Bus users can plan, book and pay for travel using the latest technology</p> <p>Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner</p> <p>Bus services allow older people to continue to live independently</p> <p>Bus travel is affordable for users</p>	<p>2.Improve cross ticketing across operators and modes and Easy Payment Systems</p>	<p>5. Improve the Discovery Card offer working across all operators including concentrated marketing to promote it to residents</p> <p>6. Agree affordable/competitive prices for multi operator tickets depending on location</p> <p>7. Consider zoned ticket prices in areas served by multi operators</p> <p>8. Bus/Rail smart ticketing specifically for older people</p> <p>9. Specify technology for easy payments</p> <p>10. Seek greater use of buses by local employers</p>
<p>Air Quality is better as a consequence of investment in cleaner buses as opposed to cars</p>	<p>3.Use of Clean Technology</p>	<p>11. Promotion of bus use reducing emissions compared to cars</p> <p>12. Prioritise newer cleaner buses in air quality areas, seek funding for retrofitting clean exhaust filters or new vehicles</p> <p>13. Work with bus operators on investing in new vehicle technology</p>
<p>Bus services are punctual, reliable and accessible</p>	<p>4.Prioritise investment in modern suitable bus infrastructure</p>	<p>14. Work with partners to improve infrastructure offer for residents including smart shelters</p> <p>15. Improve bus information sources for modern travellers using the latest technology</p>

		16. GPS on all services linked to real time at roadside and key locations such as rail stations, shopping centres, major employment zones
<p>Bus services are punctual, reliable and accessible</p> <p>Bus users can plan, book and pay for travel using the latest technology</p> <p>Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner</p>	5.Design new developments to incorporate buses as a priority	<p>17. Seek developers funding free/low cost bus travel for new residents on new housing developments for a period to engender a bus culture</p> <p>18. Developers to design housing and industrial estates with easy access for buses and modern smart stops and shelters</p>
<p>Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner</p> <p>Bus services allow older people to continue to live independently</p> <p>Bus travel is affordable for users</p>	6.Prioritise support funding for bus and community transport services that contribute to the West Sussex Plan	<p>19. Update bus funding criteria to reflect the outcomes in the West Sussex Plan</p> <p>20. Review use of grant funding for CT</p> <p>21. Develop a proposal for partner Councils to assist in funding most needed local services</p> <p>22. Ensure plans for services are rural proofed</p> <p>23. Develop internal minibus and transport service to assist in filling some gaps in the delivery of passenger transport, particularly in rural areas.</p>
<p>Bus services give people a viable alternative to being a car owner</p> <p>Bus services allow older people to continue to live independently</p> <p>Bus operators and their services give a consistently good level of quality for users across the county</p>	7.Public sector funding varies	<p>24. Develop an agreement with District/Borough Councils to provide joint funding with WSCC</p> <p>25. Develop existing agreements with Town and Parish Councils to provide funding towards local bus and community transport</p> <p>26. Formalise agreements across the Total Transport Councils to continue to pool funds and joint working on solutions across the region</p>
Bus services give	9. Bus Travel can be unaffordable for some	27. Work with bus operators to provide young peoples child

people a viable alternative to being a car owner Bus travel is affordable for users	young people	fares for 16-19s in full time education
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2.5 Funding

Funding for bus services has been steadily reduced in recent years. Government grants ceased, leading to a reduction in support for conventional bus services, though the grants for community transport were ring fenced. Since the Government transferred the responsibility for administration of ENCTS in West Sussex from District/Borough Councils to the County Council in 2011/12 funding for the scheme has been increased by over £2.5m since it transferred to WSCC in order to meet inflationary pressure, putting further pressure on reducing budgets.

However, commercial bus patronage across West Sussex has been steadily increasing and seen as a success story. The bus operators have told us this is partially down to how we have worked together supporting some services where needed, but also in the delivery of much needed infrastructure and information about their services. Capital funding from infrastructure improvements has come from various sources including WSCC Highways, S106 developer funding and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) that provides funding for growth.

Bids for capital funding for bus infrastructure improvements can be made through two programmes. The funds can come various sources. Schemes costing over £1m are delivered within the Strategic Transport Improvement Programme (STIP). Schemes costing less than £1m are delivered through the Local Transport Improvement Programme (LTIP). Both programmes have potential schemes evaluated against set criteria as funding has to be prioritised. Work on LTIP has been progressed at pace, leading to a number of improvements with officers working with the bus companies.

Other opportunities can be explored with the Total Transport Fund partners, notably the use of community transport and the internal fleet.

3 DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

The Bus Services Act outlines the powers and opportunities that local authorities can use to improve bus services to support the economy and connect communities to the workplace and vital public services.

Whilst funding remains challenging there are the opportunities explored in 2.5.

Given on-going funding constraints the Strategy does not contain specific targets. The proposed delivery plan is set out below. We will work with all relevant partners to deliver the strategy which will benefit the residents and economic vitality of West Sussex.

3.1 Actions

Action 1: We will strengthen relationships between the County Council and its key stakeholders including bus and community transport operators, public sector partners and the LEP. We will put in place governance arrangements to oversee the delivery of the bus strategy, monitor and report on progress.

Action 2: We will enter into an Enhanced Partnerships arrangement under powers within the Bus Services Act 2017 with the bus operators and other partners. The partnerships will seek to actively achieve better bus services used as a travel more of choice over the car where appropriate. This will include identifying how the partners work together to combat congestion through road reallocation and other bus prioritisation solutions.

Action 3: We will ensure our approach to reviewing use of road space and developing highways and transport schemes fully considers how buses will be prioritised over cars.

Action 4: We will ensure the Local Transport Plan 2011 to 2026 is reviewed to align with this Bus Strategy.

Action 5: We will formalise our partnering arrangements with Surrey County Council, East Sussex County Council and Brighton and Hove City Council, developed through the Total Transport initiative, and work together to pool resources where appropriate.

Action 6: We will ensure that new developments are designed to accommodate buses and that developer funding is ringfenced to fund low cost bus travel.

Action 7: We will take forward the delivery of bus infrastructure through the Local Transport Improvements Programme (LTIP). See Appendix x for list of proposed schemes.

Action 8: We will review supported bus services and community transport funding to prioritise where they mostly contribute to the West Sussex Plan.

Action 9: We will develop a joint plan with bus operators to prioritise the use of clean vehicles in Air Quality Management Areas.

Action 10: We will, through the Enhanced Partnerships, improve multi-operator and multi-modal travel by reviewing the tickets and products allowing this. This will include seeking to have fares structures aligned across operators on an easily understood basis and the increased use of easy payments solutions enhancing the experience for users.

Action 11: We will, through the Enhanced Partnerships, support investment in clean bus technology solutions and new vehicles in areas where congestion occurs and Air Quality Management Areas. In addition, we will support the use of new technologies including hybrid and electric vehicles.

Action 12: We will, through the Enhanced Partnerships, work with bus companies to provide lower cost fares for young people and other incentives for their use and to build commercial patronage.

Action 13: We will work with district/borough and town/parish councils to jointly contribute to the cost of supporting non-commercial bus and community transport services.

Action 14: We will work with our partners seeking alternative sustainable provision in rural areas where conventional buses are not suitable.

Action 15: We will review the funding of community transport with district/borough/town/parish councils to provide a coordinated approach to its local provision.

Action 16: We will work closely with community transport providers in the delivery of training and vehicle sharing to help their prospect of viability. We will work with community minibus operators in the sharing of resources to keep costs down.

3.2 Communications Plan

To ensure that the benefits of the Strategy can be achieved our approach is to carry out the following actions:

Action C1: Public consultation on intended strategic priorities in spring 2018

Action C2: Revise Strategy taking into account stakeholder feedback.

Action C3: Set baseline data for existing bus services through Enhanced Partnership working group, including use of GPS bus tracking for congestion/punctuality and bus user surveys. Explore use of online and app solutions for future user feedback.

Action C4: Public engagement exercise following review of support bus and community transport funding (See Action 8 above). This is expected to take place in autumn 2018 with any changes in 2019.

All communications will be carried out in accordance with WSCC Community and Communication strategies.

Appendices for background

APPENDIX 1

1. Existing Approach

1.1 Conventional Bus Services

The County Council spends £1.8m on directly supporting conventional timetabled bus services that are not commercially viable. In addition income from developer contributions, Gatwick Airport, other large employers and some town and parish councils increases the expenditure on supporting bus services to £3.4m. This approach has been used for many years following the deregulation of bus services in 1986. The amount has reduced since Central Government ceased substantial funding to Local Transport Authorities (LTA's) for rural transport (the Rural Bus Subsidy Grant).

Nearly 27 million passenger journeys are undertaken across all timetabled bus services in West Sussex each year. The majority of these services are on services operated commercially with no support from the County Council. Approximately 13.5 million bus miles are undertaken across the network.

The current criteria for prioritising services are based on the following:

- Cost per passenger subsidy
- Wider Economic Impacts provided by service location/type
- Patronage Trends – likelihood of increase leading to commercialisation
- Resource options – likelihood of attracting alternative funding
- Option value – whether there are alternatives for residents to access
- Interchange possibilities
- Contribution to Land Use Policy

Weightings to the criteria were added when reviewing supported services in 2011. This allowed exploration of service frequency reductions as opposed to full funding withdrawal where possible enabling some residents to still have a service in some cases.

The County Council works with local bus operators and other partners such as district/borough councils, and developers in the commissioning of bus infrastructure such as bus stops, shelters and Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI). This is via capital funding and developer (S106) contributions.

1.2 Community Transport

The County Council provides grant funding to community transport schemes who apply via the West Sussex Forum for Accessible Transport on an annual basis. This is to support schemes providing community buses that are timetabled services operated by voluntary organisations where conventional bus services wouldn't operate, notably in rural areas. In addition, it supports demand responsive schemes such as Dial-a-Rides, voluntary car schemes and shopmobility services. The total annual budget for these grants is £155k

1.3 English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS)

ENCTS provides free off-peak bus travel for people who have reached the national retirement age and people of any age with registered disabilities. The national scheme is administered locally by the County Council, which has decided to subsidise free bus travel for people with disabilities at any time.

The County Council reimburses bus journeys made by pass holders on registered timetable services starting in West Sussex. If the service returns from within another county or unitary authority's area they reimburse the return journey. Scheduled coach services are not included; only local bus services. If the number of passengers regularly causes the buses to overload the operator has to put on additional capacity and the County Council is duty bound to fund it.

It's a common misconception that the County Council is supporting the local bus services themselves through the Scheme. The payment to bus operators is reimbursing the pass-holders travel and not paying for the running of the bus itself.

The national Scheme isn't fully funded so the County Council has to fund any shortfall from within its own budget. The overall cost of the scheme is approximately £11m per annum. The approximate number of bus journeys undertaken by pass holders is 9.5m (2016/17). The number of journeys has been falling in recent years mainly owing to the increase in eligibility age for older people. However, this still means about 35% of all bus journeys are undertaken by non-paying passengers.

1.4 Home to School Transport

The County Council has a statutory duty to provide free school transport for entitled pupils attending their nearest suitable school based on meeting walking distance criteria. Approximately 7,000 pupils receive transport that can be via local bus services, trains, coaches and taxis. The latter are generally used for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) who are unable to travel on conventional public transport.

The County Council spends approximately £12.8m on Home to School Transport (including post 16) through purchasing season tickets, contracting coaches and taxis, as well as via its internal fleet. The costs are met through the Home to School Transport budget held by Education & Skills.

1.5 Health and Social Care

The County Council arranges transport for residents eligible for day and/or residential services depending on criteria. Numbers of service users travel to and from day services via internal minibuses operated by the County Council. Others use local public transport using their ENCTS pass for free travel on conventional buses. In some cases this follows use of Independent Travel Training commissioned by Adults Services.

Travel to health care is made in various ways including by:

- Conventional bus services – that often include the local hospital in their routing. Older passengers may be able to travel free off-peak via ENCTS, disabled pass holders can travel anytime for free and can have a companion
- Community Transport – residents can access local schemes, some of which specialise in travel to medical appointments and provide companions to help them when at the hospital or other medical facility
- Patient Transport Services (PTS) – for eligible people with a diagnosed health care need whose travel is funded by the NHS using cars and accessible minibuses

The County Council has worked with local bus operators and the NHS to divert services into hospitals as well as providing travel information screens in the reception area.

APPENDIX 2

1 Bus Services Act 2017 – partnering (PCs)

The Bus Services Act allows LTAs (outside London) options to play a greater role in their local bus networks. The Act outlines Four approaches that WSCC could pursue:

Advanced Quality Partnerships

Under a bus partnership services continue to be operated by commercial bus operator. New standards are set which some or all of the bus operators in the area are required to meet. The Advanced Quality Partnership Scheme (AQPS) is made by the local authority generally for a service, route or corridor. However AQPS can be for a wider geographic area. Operators not meeting the standards in the AQPS will not be able to use any of the infrastructures the local authority has provided. Operators do have a say in the proposals but this can be a time consuming process.

Enhanced Partnerships

An Enhanced Partnership (EP) is an agreement between the local authorities and the majority of the bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. It includes a clear vision of the improvements it is aiming for from the EP Plan. A framework is set up to ensure the partners have the best opportunity to solve problems together as a collective. The range of outcomes that can be achieved through an EP is broader than can be delivered through an AQPS.

Franchising

Franchising is an established model used in London as well as many cities across Europe. Local authorities have the power to determine where and when services will run and how they will be operated. This is typically under a contract to the local authority. Franchising does cost the local authority more to operate as it has a dramatic impact on the commerciality of the services. It brings many opportunities but does expose local authorities to significant financial risks.

The decision to introduce a franchising arrangement has to be taken locally by a named individual such as a Mayor, who is accountable for it. The Secretary of State for Transport has to approve the franchising scheme.

Advanced Ticketing Schemes

These establish multi-operator and multi-modal ticketing schemes where local authorities can specify, among other things, technology that is used. The authority also has to consider how advanced ticketing arrangements can be facilitated with journeys to and from nearby authorities. Powers do not allow local authorities to set the price of tickets as they have to be agreed by the operators.

The County Council did have voluntary quality bus partnerships but these have largely fallen by the wayside owing to lack of resources. However, some pockets of good work have been undertaken through the Growth Plans on a local basis, such as in Crawley. In addition, the County Council has worked closely with bus operators on improvements to local bus infrastructure through the Local Transport Improvement Programme (LTIP) where bus infrastructure improvements of up to £1m can be delivered. Congestion remains an issue as it is growing on key corridors used by bus services that require a broader approach to achieving solutions.

Discussion:

Bus patronage in West Sussex has been rising in the last ten years contrary to a national trend of falling numbers outside London. The majority of the journeys are undertaken on commercial bus services with no direct support from the County Council.

Whilst season tickets are purchased for entitled pupils and journeys are reimbursed under ENCTS the bus companies have largely invested themselves in those services. Successes have been where the County Council provides good bus infrastructure and RTPI working in collaboration with the bus operators and district/borough councils.

The option of Bus Franchising isn't considered appropriate at this current time as it would essentially mean the County Council would have to seek the Secretary of State's approval with a suitable business case. That business case would require substantial ongoing funding to resource a local model akin to Transport for London. Therefore franchising is being discounted to ensure there remains a robust commercial network in West Sussex.

Is there a potential link with crowd-funding (our Space Hive project) to secure funding for community transport? If there is, it could be a great outcome.