

Future management of local bus network in Devon

Report of the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: that the Cabinet be asked to:

- (a) Continue with the establishment of an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with our local bus companies to implement actions from the Government's National Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding allocation.
- (b) Seek a review by the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport on the state of the network by November 2022 when the Enhanced Partnership should be in place.
- (c) Actively promote the use of public transport to restore public confidence and grow passenger numbers.
- (d) Give the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, delegated powers to continue to develop the County Council's Enhanced Partnership and respond to the commercial changes to the local bus network.
- (e) Take the content of this report into account when making a decision on the Notice of Motion on Better Buses for Devon under a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

1. Summary

This paper sets out an update to the County Council's BSIP bid after the indicative allocation from the Department for Transport (DfT) and considers a reference from a special meeting of Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee (HATOC) on 12 April convened to consider Bus Services in Exeter.

At full Council on 26 May 2022 in accordance with Standing Order 6(6) a Notice of Motion on Better Buses for Devon was referred, without discussion, to the Cabinet for consideration. The Notice of Motion is set out in Appendix A. Cabinet is asked to consider the content of this report when deciding its recommendation back to Council (under a separate item on this agenda).

2. Introduction

Following Cabinet approval on 13 October 2021 (See Minute *52 set out in Appendix A), the County Council's bid to implement its BSIP was submitted to the DfT by the required deadline of 31 October 2021. The bid was put together based on the feedback from the DfT to be ambitious. The County Council finally received an indicative funding allocation from the DfT on 4 April 2022 and this report sets this out and the next steps.

Since the October 2021 Cabinet report and the County Council's BSIP submission to the DfT, local bus services have continued to go through a difficult period due to the following:

- the Omicron COVID-19 variant stalling the recovery in passenger numbers over the winter period. At the end of the fourth quarter of 2021/22 overall passenger numbers stood at 60% of pre COVID levels. At the time of writing early indications are that April and May have seen more people travelling.
- Changing working patterns resulting in less commuters and those who are using the bus are travelling less often.
- National Bus Pass holders' reluctance to return to travelling by bus. Following the Government guidance, the level of reimbursement payments to bus companies for journeys made will reduce over the next 12 months to actual levels of travel, rather than paying at pre-COVID levels.
- The sector being impacted by the inflation pressures, in particular the rising cost of fuel. This has led to increased fares.
- An acute shortage of drivers leading to reductions in frequencies and lost mileage on some services, especially those operated locally by Stagecoach.
- Lack of up-to-date information about what Stagecoach is operating leading to loss of passenger confidence in travelling.
- County Council contract surrenders with concerns about replacement operators due to difficulty recruiting and retaining staff.

It was the Stagecoach service failures in Exeter which led to the Special Exeter HATOC meeting held 12 April 2022. This report considers the recommendations from that meeting (See Appendix A for the resolution of the Exeter HATOC).

Taking the slower recovery in passenger numbers into account, COVID related Government funding continues to support the network, but this will end in October 2022. There is an expectation from the DfT that by this point Local Transport Authorities (LTA) and bus companies will have worked together to develop a sustainable network post COVID funding.

The County Council does not accept that, up until the start of the pandemic, privatisation, deregulation and under funding has created a reduction in the bus network across Devon. Up until March 2020 many routes operated at improved frequencies when compared to October 1986 when buses were deregulated and were carrying more passengers. Patronage grew in the 2000's and remained steady during the 2010's in contrast to many other areas. This was due to the successful partnership between the County Council and the local bus companies and a Council which continued to support public transport during difficult financial times.

Local bus services are an essential, and often forgotten, part of the transport infrastructure and offer great opportunity to reduce private transport and meet climate targets.

However, the pandemic has been a major shock to the transport sector and new models of delivery should be explored.

The BSIP funding allocation, challenges in the sector and recommendations from HATOC are all linked and need to be considered alongside each other, rather than

in isolation. Officers are also monitoring and managing the impacts all factors will have on the County Council's public transport budget for future financial years.

3. Proposal

Proposal One – Establishment of an Enhanced Partnership

Notwithstanding the comments below in relation to the HATOC recommendations, in order to receive the BSIP allocation, and any future Government funding relating to local bus services, the County Council must continue with its plans to put in place the Enhanced Partnership (EP) with our local bus companies. The implementation of this partnership, and public consultation agreed at the October Cabinet, has been delayed due to the significant period of time it took the DfT to respond to the BSIP submissions.

The establishment of an EP follows a statutory process, clearly defined in the guidance issued by DfT following the Bus Services Act 2017 and updated in light of the National Bus Strategy. It will comprise:

- an EP Plan which sets the high-level vision and objectives for bus services in the local area which is expected to closely follow relevant sections of the BSIP; and,
- an EP Scheme which sets out the precise detail of how the BSIP vision and objectives will be achieved, including any commitments made by the LTA or standards to be met by bus operators.

An EP Board will be put in place made up of the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment & Transport, relevant senior officers of the County Council and operators covering the major provider and medium and smaller sized bus companies. The Board will manage the EP Plan and scheme, prioritise future schemes and where funding is spent, and monitor targets on both the County Council and the bus companies.

The EP Board will also include the Chair of a Bus Forum. This Bus Forum will, along with the County Council and bus companies, include representatives from rail and community transport providers, Town, Parish and District Councils, bus user groups and from sectors impacted by public transport including business, health, and education.

It is now planned to have the EP in place by 15 September 2022, with a public consultation taking place this August. This consultation will consider the current issues facing local bus services, the future development of the network, fares and should the need arise, where the County Council should be prioritising its support in the future.

Should the County Council pursue the Franchising of local bus services in the longer term, it must still put in place the Enhanced Partnership now. Except for Greater Manchester who are already committed to a Franchising scheme, all other areas who are considering Franchising are first expected to put an EP in place.

Proposal Two – As part of the Devon Devolution deal, seek to gain powers for the franchising of local bus services as a longer-term option

The National Bus Strategy sets out that franchising can be an effective way of correcting a market failure. The ability to establish a franchise for local bus services are provided by the Bus Services Act 2017, which granted these powers to Mayoral Combined Authorities. It is also possible for other authorities, including County Councils, to gain these powers providing regulations have been made which confirm that authority is a franchising authority.

Once the powers are available an authority requires consent from the Secretary of State for Transport to initiate the franchising process. The Secretary of State's role in the process is to determine whether the authority in question has clear aspirations which will benefit passengers, a sensible plan in place and the right attributes to make franchising a success.

The Secretary of State will require the authority to show that the local authority has:

- Plans to make bus services better for passengers, including by increasing services, lowering fares, providing comprehensive ticketing systems, and integrating services. The authority must explain why these outcomes would not be achieved through the introduction of partnership arrangements with local bus operators.
- Powers in place to make franchising a success, including control of both local roads and public transport, together with planning responsibilities and control of issues such as parking policy.
- Effective governance arrangements in place. The decision-making and accountability arrangements need to be transparent and authorities seeking consent will need to set out how this will be achieved.
- The ability to demonstrate that franchising can be put into practice effectively across the geography of the area and why the specified area is appropriate.
- The capability and resources to deliver franchising. This would include previous commitments to improving public transport and how they plan to finance a system of franchising, including the long-term level of funding.

Franchising authorities will need to conduct an assessment of their franchising scheme, or business case. This would need to describe the effects of the scheme, its contribution to Local Transport Plan policies, how they would make and operate the scheme, if they could afford the scheme, value for money of the scheme and the extent to which the authority is likely to be able to secure local services that are operated under local service contracts. The key activities in this assessment are:

- Developing the compelling case for change
- Setting objectives
- Options generation and refinement
- Detailed assessment of options
- Selection of preferred option.

This is a detailed process that is required to take into account the strategic case, financial case, commercial case and management case before setting out its conclusions.

If the authority then wishes to proceed with its franchising proposal it is required to obtain an independent audit report on its assessment to assess the information used, validity of information used and outcomes.

Following preparation of the assessment and receipt of the auditor's report the authority must consult widely on their proposals. This consultation must include the assessment of the scheme, area covered, services to be provided, the start date, plans for ongoing engagement and plans to involve small and medium sized bus operators. Key stakeholders who must be consulted are specified.

Following the consultation process the authority must produce a report setting out their response to the consultation together with their decision as to whether to proceed.

At the same time as publishing the response to the consultation, if the scheme is proceeding, the authority must make and publish the franchise scheme. This includes the area included and the date(s) the franchise starts. The franchise may be split into sub-areas to phase in the start. There will then be a transitional period up to the implementation date.

The County Council will, through the Devon Devolution deal, seek Franchising powers. However, in the short term, it remains committed to improving the quality of services under the planned EP Plan and Scheme. Once a Devolution Deal for Devon has been successfully concluded and the necessary powers are in place, then would be the time for the Cabinet to consider a statutory assessment of Franchising and a possible notice of intent to prepare a Franchising Assessment.

While no detailed work has yet taken place, Cabinet should not underestimate the work that would be required in pursuing the Franchising option. Metropolitan Combined Authorities, with significantly more resource and funding than available to the County Council, have yet to complete the process after a number of years. It would require a significant increase in resources, both officer and financial. With the high level of uncertainty at the current time, in the short-term resources are better utilised addressing the unacceptable level of service failure by Stagecoach by working with them, and our other bus companies, through the EP process.

Proposal Three – Actively promote the use of public transport to restore public confidence and grow passenger numbers

The establishment of the EP, alongside the work Officers from the County Council's Transport Coordination Service (TCS) are undertaking on establishing a sustainable network post COVID recovery funding, are essential steps in developing a network which needs to be actively promoted. This promotion is required as part of the BSIP funding allocation, including encouraging the use of the National Bus Pass.

Measures within the EP will include promoting a better passenger experience through improved quality of information. This will be developed around the "Devon Bus" brand which sits alongside the existing Travel Devon approach. The County Council will seek to promote bus use to a range of potential users for both regular and casual use. We will meet modal shift and passenger growth targets by working with bus operators and other stakeholders to identify potential opportunities.

Building on successful passenger growth on local rail services we believe that promoting local bus services for access to leisure, including innovative use of social media and ticket promotions, is a key area to develop.

The recent improvements in services which connect with rail services between Totnes, Kingsbridge and Salcombe, Okehampton and Tavistock and Barnstaple, Lynton and Lynmouth show what is possible when funding is available, partners work together, and the bus company providing the service can deliver a reliable service. However, this does come at a cost.

We are committed to an improved passenger experience. This includes reviewing bus stops across the County, upgrading lighting at key locations, developing improved Real Time provision and the implementation of a passenger charter. The EP, through the EP Board and Bus Forum, will provide the mechanisms for managing and monitoring the performance of the County Council and the bus companies in these areas and wider areas such as bus priority and reliability.

4. Options/Alternatives

The following options are considered as part of this report:

- Development of the Enhanced Partnership Board and Scheme

The preferred option and a condition of the allocation of Government funding.

- Franchising the network

A longer-term option which can only be considered if the County Council gains the necessary powers.

- Continue with the deregulated market put in place as part of the 1985 Transport Act

With the impact of the pandemic on the bus network still being felt, a closer working relationship is essential between the County Council and the bus companies. However, services operated under the EP will still be either commercially provided or local authority tendered, as now.

- Direct “Municipal” ownership and operation by the local authority

The 2017 Bus Services Act sets out that bus services should continue to be provided by commercial operators, not local authorities. Local authorities cannot set up new municipal bus companies to compete for franchised services with existing operators or any new private sector providers.

Following a request made by the Children’s Scrutiny Committee, Officers from the TCS have been tasked to explore approaches taken by local authorities for an inhouse school transport service. This work may help with future options should legislation change.

5. Consultations

The Cabinet decision on 13 October 2021 committed to a wider public consultation of local bus services. As set out above this has been delayed due to the lengthy response time from the DfT, but this will take place during August.

Any future planned changes to the County Council's supported bus network to take into account future pressures and budget allocations will, wherever possible, include a wide consultation.

6. Strategic Plan

Transport is a cross-cutting theme across all areas of the Council's strategic plan playing a key role in ensuring access to key services, including education, health, and employment. It is important that it is considered at an early stage in the development of any plans to ensure access for Devon's communities.

It is strongly linked to the themes of stronger communities, the climate emergency, and a financially secure Council.

7. Financial Considerations

The indicative funding allocation from the DfT for Devon's BSIP is £8,811,000 capital and £5,246,270 revenue. This total funding of £14,057,270 is for the three financial years from 2022/23 through to 2024/25.

Based on this revised funding revised plans submitted to the DfT include:

For capital funding:

- Bus priority measures for Exeter, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple. A summary is set out in Appendix B;
- A Countywide bus pinch point removal programme requiring minor civil works or traffic management measures;
- Bus station enhancements including Newton Abbot, Tavistock, Barnstaple and Tiverton;
- Bus stops infrastructure improvements and Real Time information;
- Improved street lighting linked to a safer environment in and around bus stops;
- Bus stops multi-modal integration upgrades;
- Upgrades to ticket machines to enable all to read QR codes for the future development of fares initiatives.

Summary of Capital Funding by financial year

Financial Year	BSIP allocation	Match funding	Sources of match funding
2022/23	£1,906,000	£690,000	Local Transport Plan Capital Highway Programme DCC Bus Shelter contract
2023/24	£2,840,000	£624,000	Local Transport Plan DCC Bus Shelter contract
2024/25	£4,065,000	£575,000	Local Transport Plan DCC Bus Shelter contract

For revenue funding:

- Fares reductions with a multi operator day ticket allowing unlimited travel across the County;
- Town fare ticket pilots in Bideford, Exmouth and Newton Abbot;
- Promotional events to encourage people to try the bus, for example through one off fare reductions;
- Some limited bus service improvements building on the success of existing services.

Summary of Revenue Funding by financial year

Financial Year	BSIP allocation	Match funding	Sources of match funding
2022/23	£1,279,565	£99,000	DCC public transport publicity and promotion budget
2023/24	£2,197,573	£99,000	DCC public transport publicity and promotion budget
2024/25	£1,769,132	£99,000	DCC public transport publicity and promotion budget

DfT guidance is clear that the funding cannot be used to maintain existing facilities or support existing bus services but must be used for improvements to existing infrastructure or services.

In addition to the funding allocated through the BSIP process, the County Council's public transport spend for the 2022/23 financial year is made up of the following:

County Council funding

Revenue Source	Budget
Core revenue budget:	£5,155,000
On Street Parking revenue	£2,118,000
Community Transport	£385,000
Total	£7,658,000

Within the 2022/23 financial year the following Government grants have been received:

Revenue Source	Budget	Purpose
Bus Service Operator Grant	£1,024,000	Related to fuel rebates for local bus contracts
DfT Local Transport Fund	£1,190,351	Post COVID-19 recovery funding for LTAs
Total	£2,214,351	

Some Government Grants, as with the BSIP funding, are profiled over more than one financial year.

External funding sources are also available for specific services, usually through Section 106 payments.

The National Concessionary Travel Scheme budget is £7,625,000 in 2022/23. This is not a subsidy towards public transport but is to pay operators for revenue lost due to accepting the national bus pass. Following Government guidance this has been

paid at pre-COVID 19 levels during the pandemic. However, in 2022/23 there will be a gradual reduction in reimbursement until it meets actual levels of travel and the County Council's budget reflects this. This will result in additional pressure on the sustainability of local bus services.

The public transport budget is currently carrying a high risk with commercial withdrawals, contract surrenders and highly inflating costs. The budget and Government grants available in 2022/23 should be sufficient to manage pressures for the current financial year. However, if revenue funding, from all sources, is not sufficient from 2023/24 onwards then we may have to plan for 20% reduction in services. Whether this is necessary will become clearer in the Autumn when we have a full picture following the completion of the network review, required by the DfT.

8. Legal Considerations

Local bus services continue to be operated under the 1985 Transport Act. The 2000 Transport Act and 2017 Local Bus Services Act allows for the options set out in the paper to be considered.

9. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

Based on data in 2019, transport accounted for 31% of Devon's greenhouse gas emissions and is the second largest emitter. Better carbon outcomes will be part of the EP plan and scheme when in place.

We will continue to investigate suitable opportunities and funding solutions to deliver a greener, modern bus fleet across the county. For example, in Exeter, working with Exeter City Council, we are keen to develop suitable and sustainable charging mechanisms that puts us in a better position to bid for future rounds of Zero Emission Bus Regional Scheme (ZEBRA) or equivalent.

A good public transport network reduces adverse environmental impacts by reducing the number of private vehicles, leading to less traffic and less emissions. The current unreliability of services provided by Stagecoach gives uncertainty that appointments can be made and leads to more people travelling by private car.

The County Council's Strategic Plan states that we will prioritise sustainable travel and transport and support the transition to low emission services.

10. Equality Considerations

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/

new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation or socio-economic disadvantage.

This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment / Impact Assessment or other form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective.

In progressing the County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan, an Impact Assessment was prepared for Cabinet on 13 October 2021. [Bus Services Improvement Plan](#)

The positive outcomes highlighted in this assessment become negative consequences when bus services fail or are reduced. Should County Council initiated reductions in services be proposed in the future a new full Impact Assessment will be required.

11. Risk Management Considerations

These proposals have been assessed and all necessary safeguards or actions have been taken/included to safeguard the Council's position.

Impacts of service reductions or failures and rising costs of providing transport is an identified risk within the County Council's risk management process. These risks are updated on a regular basis to reflect the current volatility of the transport sector.

12. Public Health Impact

Travelling by public transport, including making your way to and from a bus stop by sustainable means can have a positive impact on an individual's health.

The lack of reliable or regular transport can impact in a number of ways, including mental health and loneliness. The County Council's recent success as a pilot for the DfT's Tackling Loneliness with Transport pilot will result in a series of innovative transport schemes being introduced in Devon to help reduce loneliness.

The County Council has been awarded just under £494,000 and is one of 12 projects across the country to have successfully bid. Devon is the only County Council to have been chosen out of more than 200 applicants and the funds will be used to pilot projects involving a variety of support aimed at reducing loneliness in over-55's and young people aged 16-24.

13. Conclusion

Having put a considerable amount of work into developing the County Council's BSIP, we were disappointed with the allocation of funding from the DfT. The County Council is highly regarded nationally in the way it has continued to support public transport at a time many others have withdrawn funding and felt this should be recognised. However, with a reduced pot of funding available, and taking into account many councils did not receive any funding, including some of our neighbours, we are now keen to maximise the opportunity the allocation gives.

The only way to deliver improvements in the short term is through the establishment of the EP Plan and Scheme with associated Bus Forum. This Forum will give an improved avenue for issues to be highlighted and addressed.

The Exeter HATOC has highlighted deep concerns about the standard of local bus services which must be tackled if we are to give confidence to the travelling public and grow passenger numbers again. Through the Devon Devolution deal we have a long-term option to gain franchising powers but in the short term this is not available. Therefore, officer time is better spent working in partnership to design a sustainable network post COVID recovery funding and building back up from this point.

There will be commercial withdrawals and contract surrenders which the County Council will need to respond to, taking into account its own budget pressures and overall responsibilities.

The points made by Exeter HATOC about promoting the network and encouraging people back in buses is important and this will be a key part of the work undertaken. This will include developing the Devon Bus brand across all services which should represent confidence and reliability.

Meg Booth
Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport: Councillor
Andrea Davis

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

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Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Nil		

Future management of local bus network in Devon - Final

Appendix A to CET/22/22

Consideration of the Proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan by Cabinet in October 2021

On 13 October 2021 Cabinet, in relation to the County Council's response to the National Bus Strategy, resolved that:

- (a) that the main principles of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to be agreed in partnership with local bus companies be endorsed;
- (b) that the forthcoming public consultation on the main recommendations within the County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan be approved;
- (c) that the proposed bid to the Government of approximately £34m per year (revenue) and with a local contribution based on the emerging allocated revenue budget for 2022/23 be approved; and in addition, approval to a bid for £7.5m capital for bus priority measures with a local contribution from the Local Transport Plan given, subject to a further review of cost and approval by the County Treasurer and the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport; and
- (d) that delegated authority be given the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport to make minor amendments to the Bus Service Improvement Plan following the consultation and response from the Department for Transport (DfT).

(Minute *53 refers [Printed minutes](#)  PDF 394 KB)

Consideration of the Quality of Local Bus Services in Exeter at a special meeting of the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee in April 2022

On 12 April 2022 the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee held a special meeting to discuss the quality of local bus services in Exeter and resolved that:

- (a) that after listening to members and the public statements today, the Exeter Highways and Traffic Orders Committee concludes that the bus service in Exeter and its travel to work area is currently not fit for purpose for the following reasons:
 - impact on vulnerable users of buses being cancelled without notice and for safety of women and girls where the last bus of the day fails to turn up;
 - failure of the Stagecoach 'App' to provide reliable up to date real time bus information;
 - lack of zero emission buses, particularly on routes within the city centre and heavily trafficked arterial routes;
 - disappointing level of funding allocated to Devon under the Government's bus improvement strategy;
 - ongoing bus driver recruitment and retention issues; and
 - recently reduced timetable that has drastically cut the scheduled bus service for many areas of the city;

the Committee therefore concluded that local bus services cannot be made fit for purpose under the current legislative framework, and believes that local councils must have power to set local requirements on timetables, routes, and fares for the benefit of its residents and therefore calls for Devon County Council to press for a bus franchise arrangement to be an essential part of any Devon Devolution deal; and

- (b) that in addition to the above, the Cabinet be requested to see how it can work on a marketing campaign in partnership with Stagecoach and other local bus operators to increase patronage on local services following the reduction in patronage after the pandemic restrictions.

(Minute *45 refers [Printed minutes](#) PDF 212 KB)

Notice of Motion on Better Buses for Devon referred to Cabinet by County Council on 26 May 2022

At full Council on 26 May 2022 in accordance with Standing Order 6(6) a Notice of Motion was referred, without discussion, to the Cabinet for consideration.

That this Council:-

- (a) Notes with great concern **the huge reduction in the bus network across Devon**, that has taken place **since privatisation, deregulation, and under funding**.
- (b) Believes buses are essential to freeing up congested road space, to cleaning up the air that we all breathe and above all to connecting people to jobs, friends and life opportunities.
- (c) Records the specific ongoing problems that our local **school pupils and college students** have in properly attending their places of education across Devon through inaccessible public transport.
- (d) **Concludes that the bus service in Devon now presents itself as a failed model, to the extent that it no longer has widespread public confidence, because of its serious long term poor performance and post pandemic dysfunctionality.**
- (e) Notes the completely unacceptable regional imbalances in funding for public transport services which prioritise the South East of England, and believes this must be radically reformed, and central government must do more to provide significant funding to revitalise local transport in the South West.
- (f) **Wants to develop, design and achieve a good public transport system that runs where people need it, when people need it and at a price that is affordable.**
- (g) Understands that the Government's impact assessment of **the Bus Service Act (2017)** highlighted that public control would better address **six out of seven Local Transport Authority objectives** compared to an enhanced partnership and was the only method likely to deliver a "significant increase in patronage".
- (h) **Supports exercising powers to bring Devon's bus services back under local control via franchising, at the earliest practicable date.**
- (i) Acknowledges that the costs of franchising cannot be estimated accurately until a "**notice of intent**" has been released and the associated statutory powers to access bus operators' commercial data is employed.

Therefore, this Council requests that the Administration:-

- i. To conduct a **statutory assessment of franchising** at the earliest possible opportunity in 2022.
- ii. Explore a **notice of intent to prepare a franchising assessment** at the earliest opportunity.

(Minute 113 refers [Printed minutes](#)  PDF 504 KB

Appendix B to CET/22/22

Capital Funding Summary – Details of proposed individual schemes for Bus Priority

Scheme title or intervention	Scheme details	Delivery milestones	Outcomes at scheme level
1. Exeter Northern Corridor: New North Road to City Centre Bus Gate	Bus gate to provide more direct access to city centre for Countywide bus services approaching on 4km northern corridor between Cowley Bridge roundabout (northern edge of city) and Bus Station (city centre). Bus gate would avoid circuitous route via narrow residential streets and reduce route distance by 0.5km (12.5%) and enable stops closer to High St)	Project design completed by June 2023 Scheme completed and operational by March 2024	Intervention achieves approximately 3-minute journey time saving per bus with 8 services per hour across 8 routes, which represents a 17% reduction in bus journey times during the peak on this corridor. Passengers can disembark bus nearer to City Centre. 96 buses daily would be diverted from narrow streets, improving air quality on York Road, which has a school and was near the AQ objective level in 2019. The intervention would reduce the percentage of HGVs on York Road by 29% and on Longbrook Street by 45%.
2. Exeter Eastern Corridor: Pinhoe Road to City Centre Bus Lane and Signals Upgrade	Conversion of peak hour only bus lane to 24hrs with bus priority signals along 3.4km eastern corridor between Pinhoe Sainsburys junction (eastern edge of city) and the city centre. Intervention involves c.750m of bus lane between St Marks Ave bus gate & Tarbet Ave (300m) and between Whipton Community Hall & Widgery Rd (450m) including civils on Sidwell Street to support active and public transport corridor	Project design completed by September 2024 Scheme completed and operational by March 2025	Intervention achieves approximately 4 mins journey time saving per bus with 8 services per hour across 4 routes which represents a 27% reduction in bus journey times during the peak on this corridor.
3. Exeter Western Corridor:	Conversion of existing peak hour only bus lane to 24 hrs along 1.6km	Project design completed by March 2023	Intervention achieves approximately 2 mins journey time saving per bus

Cowick Street Bus Lane	western corridor between Buddle Lane junction (western edge of city) and the city centre. Intervention involves c.100m of bus lane.	Scheme completed and operational by March 2024	with 7 services per hour across 5 routes, which represents a 33% reduction in bus journey times during the peak on this corridor.
4. Newton Abbot Western Corridor: Highweek St to Town Centre Signals Upgrade - (linked to access to Newton Abbot Bus Station and Teignbridge District Council funded link to Bradley Lane)	Junction redesign at Highweek St / Halcyon Rd jct to prioritise buses arriving / departing from Newton Abbot bus station to improve bus access on 2.9km western corridor between Hele Park (western edge of town) and the bus station (town centre). Scheme would integrate with active travel links to town centre and complement successful Future High Streets Fund scheme, which proposes removal of traffic except buses and cyclists from part of Queen St in town centre.	Project design completed by September 2024 Scheme completed and operational by March 2025	Improved access for bus services between new development on western edge of town and the town centre (estimated 10% journey time saving in peak hour), reduction of congestion in Newton Abbot and enabling stronger multi modal integration. Increase bus patronage into Newton Abbot by 5%
5. Barnstaple Northwest Corridor: Braunton Road Bus Lane and Bus Gate	Bus signal priority on 1.9km northwest corridor between Chaddiford Lane junction (northwestern edge of town) and the bus station (town centre), with straight through priority at Pilland Way and A361 signalised junctions & extension of bus lane (c.100m) onto dual carriageway.	Project design completed by June 2023 Scheme completed and operational by March 2024	Intervention achieves approximately 2 mins journey time saving per bus with 4 services per hour which represents a 29% reduction in bus journey times during the peak on this corridor.
6. Barnstaple Northern Corridor: North Road Bus Lanes	Creation of new bus lanes on 2.1km northern corridor between North Devon Hospital (northern edge of town) and the bus station (town centre) to provide improved public	Project design completed by June 2024 Scheme completed and operational by March 2025	Improved access from town centre to North Devon Hospital. Increase bus patronage by 10% Intervention achieves approximately 1 min journey time saving per bus with 6

	transport links to the hospital and integrated with local active travel improvements identified through LCWIP (c.0.3km of bus lane)		services per hour, which represents a 13% reduction in bus journey times during the peak on this corridor. It will also improve cycle linkages between hospital and town centre
7. Exeter Central Corridor: Heavitree Bus Enhancement Package	Significant investment package on 3km central corridor between Middlemoor roundabout (eastern edge of city) and Paris Street roundabout (for city centre) including new bus lanes and series of signalised junction upgrades to improve priority and journey times for buses as well as address road safety issues for vulnerable road users on busy radial route.	Project design completed by March 2024 Scheme completed and operational by March 2025	Intervention achieves approximately 4 min journey time saving per bus with 20 services per hour across 11 routes, which represents a 20% reduction in bus journey times during the peak on this corridor. This corridor also is the only route in the city which exceeds the national air quality objective and journey-average emissions of NOx and PM will be reduced by reducing the stop-start acceleration events for buses (this will be monitored by Exeter City Council).
8. Bideford/ Barnstaple Western Bus Corridor	Improvements to bus priority on 3.4km bus corridor between Bickington and Roundswell (on western edges of the town) and the bus station (town centre). Measures include bus lane / priority measures to improve bus journey times on Bideford to Barnstaple services and serving new growth areas in the town and complementing Gratton Way bus gate and scheduled improvements at Cedars roundabout.	Project design completed by March 2024 Scheme completed and operational by March 2025	Intervention on Roundswell approach achieves approximately 1 minute with 2 services per hour across 4 routes, which represents a 6% reduction in bus journey times during the peak on this corridor. Intervention on Fremington/Bickington approach achieves potential saving of 2 mins with 4 services per hour, which represents a 13% reduction in bus journey times during the peak on this corridor.