

DECISION TITLE:

**Notice of Intent – Enhanced Partnership with Bus
Operators in Warrington**
WARRINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN BY AN OFFICER

<p>Cabinet Decision No and/or Forward Plan No (Cabinet decisions only)</p>	<p>CAB96 – made on 9/12/2019 – Approval of Local Transport Plan 4 – <i>with the Notice of Intent which is the subject of this Officer Decision Notice being in accordance with the aims and objectives of this Plan.</i></p> <p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Noted the feedback from the public and stakeholders as set out in the report and the LTP4 Consultation Report (Part C Appendix F) (ii) Approved the revised draft Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) as the basis upon which a final draft LTP4 be prepared for consideration at Full Council leading to the adoption of LTP4 as part of the Policy Framework for the Council. (iii) Delegated approval to the Director for Environment and Transport, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transportation and Public Realm to make amendments as necessary to complete the final draft Local Transport Plan 4 to include consideration of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Material changes to policy background from other organisations and/or government. • Updated supporting material currently in preparation. • Recommendations from Cabinet members
<p>Directorate Ref No (Non-Cabinet decisions only) If applicable</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>
<p>Decision detail</p>	<p>That the Council proceeds with the development of an Enhanced Partnership and that the commencement of this is confirmed through notice of the intention to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan and accompanying Enhanced Partnership Schemes and that a Notice of Intent to develop an Enhanced Partnership for local buses is published by Warrington Borough Council on or prior to the deadline set by the Department of Transport of 30th June 2021. This Notice of Intent is shown below and will be immediately placed on the Council website.</p> <p>Notice of Intent to Prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes:</p>
	<p>Via an Officer Decision Notice made on Monday, 28 June 2021, Warrington Borough Council gave approval to proceed with the development of an Enhanced Partnership. The commencement of this is confirmed through this notice of the intention to prepare an</p>

	Enhanced Partnership Plan and accompanying Enhanced Partnership Schemes, as required and set out in section 138F of the Transport Act 2000.
Reason for Decision	<p>Issuing a Notice of Intent to develop an Enhanced Partnership will enable the development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan for Warrington. This will guide future investment and development of bus services across the Borough and ensure that funding is secured from the Department for Transport to improve all aspects of bus services – in line with the objectives of the Council’s Local Transport Plan 4.</p> <p>An Enhanced Partnership is an agreement between a local transport authority and local bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. It includes a clear vision of the improvements that the partnership is aiming for (known as an Enhanced Partnership plan) and accompanying actions to achieve them (set out in one of more schemes). The local transport authority has formal responsibility for making the scheme, but at set points in the process they can only proceed with their proposals if they have the support of a defined proportion of local bus operators.</p> <p>This Notice of Intent has also been put forward because having an Enhanced Partnership is a prerequisite of any future funding. Without an Enhanced Partnership in place, Warrington Borough Council and all bus operators will lose access to funding streams including future COVID-19 recovery funds, Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG) and opportunities to secure additional future funding that arise as a direct result of the new National Bus Strategy (Bus Back Better) and the Comprehensive Spending Review.</p> <p>In recognition of the costs local transport authorities will incur in preparing the above plans the Department for Transport made an initial funding award of £100K to all authorities in May 2021 and a further funding allocation is expected, potentially of a similar amount following the issuing of the Notice of Intent. It is anticipated that this will provide sufficient funding for this work.</p>
Decision Maker/Responsible Officer	David Boyer – Director of Environment and Transport
Directorate	Environment and Transport
Lead Cabinet Member consulted (if applicable)	Cllr Hans Mundry – Cabinet Member for Transportation, Highways and Public Realm
Decision Date	Monday, 28 June 2021
	Tuesday, 29 June 2021

Date Decision was published / notified (normally within 2 clear working days of decision being made)	
Summary of options considered	<p>The National Bus Strategy outlines three options for local authorities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus franchising; • Establishing an enhanced partnership with bus operators and • By default, a do-nothing option. <p>The National Bus Strategy outlines that support will be provided for Local Transport Authorities (LTA) wishing to access franchising powers. However, Franchising powers are only available automatically to Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA). Without an elected Mayor in place, the council's current status creates a challenge for the local implementation of bus franchising. Franchising at this time is not considered to be a realistic option for Warrington. The financial and operational implications of a move to bus franchising have not been assessed at this time.</p> <p>An alternative option is to do nothing, setting aside the opportunity to develop an Enhanced Partnership. This would likely lead to the loss of a number of existing revenue support mechanisms for local buses, including Bus Service Operator Grant (BSOG) and Covid Bus Service Support Grant. Therefore this option would not see bus operations continuing their current level of service and further passenger decline would be anticipated. This option would also close the door on any future funding prospects, including COVID-19 recovery funds and those made available as part of the national strategy. Therefore this option has been discounted</p>
Interests declared	None
Background Papers (if applicable) <i>(period expires after 4 years from date of decision)</i>	<p>Guidance on Bus Service Improvement Plans and Enhanced Partnerships: Bus service improvement plans: guidance to local authorities and bus operators (publishing.service.gov.uk)</p> <p>The National Bus Strategy – published in March 2021: Bus Back Better (publishing.service.gov.uk)</p>
Confidential / exempt information	Not applicable
Category (if applicable)	Not applicable

NB. This form expires after 6 years.