



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE
& PETERBOROUGH**
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No: 6.2

Bus Strategy 2023

To:	Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board
Meeting Date:	22nd March 2023
Public report:	Yes
Lead Member:	Mayor Dr Nik Johnson
From:	Tim Bellamy, Interim Head of Transport
Key decision:	Yes
Forward Plan ref:	KD2023/006
Recommendations:	<p>The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board is recommended to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Note the outcome of the public consultation and support for the Bus Strategy;b) Approve the Bus Strategy;c) Agree to obtaining competitive quotes for three replacement local bus contracts and award contracts, using pre-determined criteria, for the period ending March 2024; andd) Delegate to the Executive Director for Place and connectivity in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer, authority to tender and procure for further local bus services subject to there being approved funding.
Voting arrangements:	Recommendation a) is not for noting therefore no vote is required.

For recommendation b - d) a vote in favour by at least two thirds of all Members (or their Substitute Members) appointed by the Constituent Councils, to include the Members appointed by Cambridgeshire County Council or Peterborough City Council, or their Substitute Members

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The Combined Authority has been working with partners to develop a Bus Strategy. The Bus Strategy is a strategy document within the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan documentation suite and sets out the policies and high-level approach to transform the bus network and peoples experience of travelling by bus.
- 1.2 The Bus Strategy was published in draft for consultation with the public. The consultation closed on 24th February 2023 and this paper sets out the results of the consultation, any changes to the consulted Bus Strategy and recommends the Bus Strategy for approval by the Combined Authority Board.

2 Background

Overview of the Bus Strategy

- 2.1 The Bus Strategy aims to set out an ambitious vision and strategy to improve our bus network in a way that will benefit the residents and businesses of our region, and to deliver the goals and objectives of the Combined Authority's Local Transport and Connectivity Plan.
- 2.2 The purpose of the Bus Strategy is not to examine detailed, granular issues around specific routes and services; more to outline the key, strategic aims, objectives, and aspirations of the Combined Authority to enable us to bid for further funding and shape the network to meet the needs of the people of the region.
- 2.3 The core ambition of the Bus Strategy is to double bus patronage (based on 2019/20 levels) by 2030. This is underpinned by ambitions to make bus services convenient, attractive, and easy to use.

Summary of the Public Consultation feedback

- 2.4 The public consultation ran from 13th January to 24th February and was published on the CPCA website. CPCA officers have engaged with local authority partners, bus operators, councillors, and other interest groups to promote engagement with the consultation.
- 2.5 The full set of feedback has been assessed and presented in Appendix 1 to this report. The following set out the key findings and themes of the public consultation:
 - 1017 responses were received through the online survey and 16 responses via other channels. Responses were provided from across the CPCA geography. The responses came from local authorities, community or business groups, bus operators and people living in the area. 96% of the responses were from people who live in the area.
 - Over 80% of the responses agreed or strongly agreed with the Vision of the Bus Strategy. 9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The disagreements where often supported by statements that the vision needs to go further, or frustration with the current situation.
 - The key themes of the positive and negative comments reflect the purpose of the strategy: Reliability, lack of services, the need for integration, and the price of fares were consistent and strong messages from the consultation.

- The response to the aims of the Bus Strategy were further supported, with 85% of responses agreeing or strongly agreeing with the aims. 7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the aims.
- The key themes of the comments reflect an eagerness to see the detail of how the aims will be achieved. While the Bus Strategy is not intended to include this detail, the feedback reflects the need to further develop the Bus Service Improvement Plan and other Bus related programmes to show how the strategy can be realised.
- Again the four main principles were highly supported, with 79% agreeing or strongly agreeing. 9% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- As with the vision and aims, the comments reflected a need to see progress toward the principles. While the Strategy sets a medium-term approach, the responses are more focused on the immediate challenges and improvements to service.
- When asked to rank the priorities within the strategy the feedback highlighted having an integrated network and services and serving rural areas as the top two priorities. Delighting Customers was the lowest priority, which reflects the focus of respondents on having the network in place first.

2.6 Based on feedback from consultation, the Bus Strategy has updated as a final version to include the summary of the consultation and emerging themes

2.7 The final Bus Strategy is attached as Appendix 2 to this report and is presented as the final version for approval. The documents have been well received and provides the policy framework for CPCA and its partners to demonstrate the link between the LTCP and the importance bus-related programmes which need to be undertaken. The Bus Strategy will enable CPCA to clearly show how the programme of work links back to the strategy. The strategy will also help to demonstrate to external funders that there is a joined-up strategy for buses and across transport modes.

Bus Services: Routes 46 and 15

2.8 A2B Travel Group Ltd has notified the Combined Authority that they are surrendering two bus routes/services. These are Route 46 that operates once a week between Linton and Newmarket, and Route 15 that operates once a week between Haslingfield and Royston. The Transport and Infrastructure Committee are asked to recommend to the Combined Authority Board to proceed with obtaining quotes for two replacement local bus contracts and award a contract using pre-determined criteria for nine months. This will align with the Network Review that will be delivered to the November 2023 Committee and Combined Authority Board meetings.

Bus Services: Route 61 and 61X

2.9 Whippet notified the Combined Authority that they were surrendering Route 61/61X (Eynesbury Tesco - St Neots Circular). Officers have explored whether it would be possible to utilise an existing contract, Ting, but it has been decided that there is insufficient capacity on that service to cater for the additional customers and provide the desired service to more rural areas. Due to the time limitations, an ODN was agreed, and the Combined Authority will be obtaining quotes for a replacement service and subsequently awarding the contract using pre-determined criteria. This will initially be a 5-month contract to provide certainty to the community in the short term.

Future unplanned service withdrawals

- 2.10 The operational management of local bus contracts requires officers to respond to notifications to surrender contracts within a 70-day notice period. This time period is defined nationally by the Traffic Commissioner and is designed to enable operators and local authorities to manage change to the network. Unplanned network changes, such as those included in this paper, can be managed through the delegation of operational decisions within the agreed MTFP and revenue budget. A decision to delegate operational decisions will help ensure that tenders to replace services which are being withdrawn can be undertaken in time and ensure there is no gap in the provision of local bus services.

Significant Implications

3 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The proposal to endorse the Bus Strategy will set the policy framework for future recommendations which are designed to enhance bus service and peoples experience of the bus. These subsequent recommendations will be project or policy specific, and each will highlight the associated Financial Implications.
- 3.2 The existing annual costs are £5,148.00 for Route 15, £7,620.60 for Route 46 and £107,214.48 for Route 61/61X. There remains funding within the MTFP and revenue budget to continue to support these services at the current contract price. Any impact on budget would be assessed as part of the tender exercise.

4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Bus Strategy is a mode specific sub-strategy of the Local Transport and Connectivity Plan, which is a statutory document. While there is no statutory requirement to prepare a Bus Strategy the documents do need to align in terms of policy ambition. The proposal to endorse the Bus Strategy will set the policy framework for future recommendations which are designed to enhance bus service and peoples experience of the bus. These subsequent recommendations will be project or policy specific, and each will highlight the associated Legal Implications.

5 Public Health Implications

- 5.1 There is no significant Public Health Implications of the decision to recommend the Bus Strategy for endorsement. Future implications of schemes to deliver the Bus Strategy will be presented to the committee as required.

6 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The recommendations of this paper set out an overarching ambition to have a positive impact on the environment and climate change. The proposal to endorse the Bus Strategy will set the policy framework for future recommendations which are designed to enhance bus service and peoples experience of the bus. These subsequent recommendations will be project or policy specific, with the aim to reduce vehicle kilometres and double bus patronage.

7 Other Significant Implications

- 7.1 There are no other significant implications of the decision to recommend the Bus Strategy for endorsement. Future implications of schemes to deliver the Bus Strategy will be presented to the committee as required.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Draft Bus Strategy
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – Summary of consultation responses

9 Background Papers

None