



Transport & Infrastructure Committee		Agenda Item
15 November 2023		7
Title:	Bus Strategy Update, including Bus Network Review	
Report of:	Neal Byers	
Lead Member:	Cllr Anna Smith, Chair of Transport and Infrastructure Committee	
Public Report:	Yes	
Key Decision:	Yes	
Voting Arrangements:	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 and Peterborough City Council, or their substitute members.	

Recommendations:

A	To receive and consider the findings of the Bus Network Review.
B	To note the positive and constructive engagement with communities and bus operators.
C	To recommend to the CPCA board the proposals for the 19 tendered bus services which were placed under review.
D	To recommend to the CPCA board a preferred way forward for the allocation of the BSIP+ funding.
E	To note the proposed focus for short-term investment if further funding was available.
F	To note the intension of CPCA to submit a submission to the Zebra round 2.
G	To note the work of CPCA to audit the on-street bus service infrastructure and information.
H	To note the update on the national £2 fare scheme.

Strategic Objective(s):

The proposals within this report fit under the following strategic objective(s):

	Achieving ambitious skills and employment opportunities
	Achieving good growth
X	Increased connectivity
	Enabling resilient communities

The proposal sets out three important workstreams to improve the bus network in the Combined Authority area. Buses are an essential part of providing connectivity to our communities.

1. Purpose

1.1	The Combined Authority and its partners are seeking an approach to provide the 'best possible' tendered bus network within the funding available. The previous approach was limited as decision makers did not have a clear process and sufficient data. The Bus Network Review is required to enable the CPCA Board to make future decisions on a more structured and balanced basis.
1.2	This paper sets out the further findings of the Bus Network Review and sets out recommendations for services to be retained and further work required to complete the review. The paper also provides an overview of an audit of the on-street infrastructure, the intention to submit a further bid to the national Zebra funding scheme and updates on the national £2 fare scheme.

2. Proposal

2.1	There is a medium-term vision to explore the best delivery model to recast the network and peoples experience of it through Bus Reform i.e. Enhanced Partnership or Franchising. An immediate decision was taken to secure the existing network and retender services during 22/23 and 23/24. Over the 23/24 financial year, the Bus Network Review workstream was established. The approach will enable Leaders to make decisions for the 24/25 financial year for tendered services on a more structured and balanced basis. The Bus Network Review focuses on the tendered bus services. Bus Reform will provide a more strategic and ambitious response to the challenges faced by the bus system.														
2.2	All existing tendered bus services have been assessed against the framework. The outcome of the analysis provides a ranking of each service against the objectives set out in the Local Bus Service Assessment Framework. This assessment has considered the need and affordability of each service. It has also considered the distance travelled for each service to help establish the value for money of more rural services.														
2.3	Undertaking the Bus Network Review The bus network review has been undertaken in two phases. This report presents the findings of the second stage which sets out those services which needed to be improved and services where further data was required. The focus of the next part of the report is on the assessment of the 19 bus services which were placed under review. Recommendations are made to retain many of the services, with improvements to existing services and new services proposed to improve connectivity for a number of communities.														
2.4	Re-cap of Initial recommendations in September for scheduled services 51 bus services are performing well in terms of the need and performance. 2 of those are marginally above the £12 per passenger journey. These 51 services are to be retained and promoted to ensure continued viability. 19 bus services were identified for review. The relevant local authority leaders have been engaged to explore proposals to improve the services.														
2.5	The following table summarises the service which have been reviewed. <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Service route</th><th>Service number</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Duxford - Whittlesford - Sawston - Whittlesford - Duxford</td><td>7A</td></tr><tr><td>Cottenham - Chatteris - March</td><td>8A</td></tr><tr><td>Peterborough: City Hospital – Hampton (Trial)</td><td>29</td></tr><tr><td>Over - St Ives</td><td>15</td></tr><tr><td>Cambridge - Fowlmere - Barley</td><td>31</td></tr><tr><td>Cambridge - Orwell - Wrestlingworth</td><td>75</td></tr></tbody></table>	Service route	Service number	Duxford - Whittlesford - Sawston - Whittlesford - Duxford	7A	Cottenham - Chatteris - March	8A	Peterborough: City Hospital – Hampton (Trial)	29	Over - St Ives	15	Cambridge - Fowlmere - Barley	31	Cambridge - Orwell - Wrestlingworth	75
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Newmarket - Fulbourn - Teversham - Newmarket Road Park & Ride	18
St Neots - The Offords - Buckden	65
West Huntingdonshire Demand Responsive Transport (Trial)	Ting
St Ives - Somersham - Ramsey	301
Huntingdon - Ramsey - Chatteris	305
St Neots - Kimbolton - Tilbrook	150
St Ives Town Service	22A (300)
Peterborough - Upwood	415
March Town Service	33A
Royston - Bassingbourn - Guilden Morden	17
Newmarket - Fordham - Soham - Stuntney - Ely	12
Haverhill - Linton - Burrough Green	19
Eynesbury - St Neots - Eaton Ford/Eaton Socon - St Neots - Eynesbury	61

Service requiring further information:

Service route	Service number
Cambridge - Cambourne	Citi4
St Ives - Pidley - Warboys	22/22X
Peterborough: Queensgate - Lynch Wood	23/23A
Ely - Cottenham - Impington	110
Newmarket - Isleham	203

2.6 Engagement with Operators, Councillors and Stakeholders

CPCA officers have engaged with all of the bus operators to set out the overall approach and impact on services they currently run. These sessions have been used to identify operational improvements, to gather additional data and to support a positive relationship between CPCA and the bus operators.

To inform bus service changes and improvements a wide range of stakeholders have been engaged during September and October. This engagement includes all local authority leaders, local Councillors, parish council groups and community groups, for example:

- Cambridge and Peterborough Integrated Care Board
- Fenland Transport Access Group
- Huntingdonshire Councillors Group
- Wittering Community group
- Cambridgeshire Sustainable Travel Alliance
- East Cambridgeshire Councillors and officers
- Two sessions with South Cambridgeshire Councillors on services 7A, 31 and 75
- A to B1120 community group

Subject to the recommendations being agreed, further engagement will be planned to resolve any points of detail and to support communication of the proposed changes.

2.7 Recommendations for services under review

The following summarises the recommendations for each of the bus services which have been placed under review. The services which are retained would be contracted for a further 12 months. This contract period reflects the considerations on Bus Reform to enable the CPCA Board to transition to an Enhanced Partnership or Franchise without incurring costs associated to contract variations which may be determined in the 2024/25 financial year. Appendix A provides a summary for each of the services, alongside the data which describes the service and map of the current route.

Service	Recommendation	Justification
7A	Retain, with improvements	This service has been reviewed as part of a package which includes 7A, 31 and 75. The 7A is recommended to be merged with a home to school service. This will provide a more cost-effective solution for both CPCA and Cambridgeshire County Council, while retaining connections for the community. A number of options have been considered for the three services, which together are intended to provide a more joined-up and integrated service, while significantly improving the value for money.
8A	Retain, with improvements	The service used to travel into Cambridge City, however, currently ends at Cottenham. This end point was determined in response to a commercial service which meant the service could no longer travel the full journey due to the potential for competition. The current end point provides no facilities for effective interchange and therefore the service has become unattractive. The proposed change is to provide a significantly improved interchange at the Milton Park and Ride. This is intended to drive additional demand by making use of a key interchange point.
29	Further engagement required	This service was introduced as a trial to provide an alternative direct route to the existing interchange option which is available. The service has seen very limited take-up over a number of years and therefore it is proposed to undertake a further review to establish if the trial should end. Last year there were less than 2,000 passengers. In addition to this service, the communities have access to important destinations, including the hospital via interchange at Peterborough bus station.
15	Retain, with improvements	The service provides a short connection to local communities in the area. In the immediate term the service can be extended to serve Willingham, which will create more demand for the service, develop the catchment area and add a direct link to St Ives for Willingham residents. A further review should be undertaken which explores the options to link with the 1A and 5A, with improved connections to Sutton. This is suggested as part of the next review of bus services.
31 and 75	Retain, with improvements	This service has been reviewed as part of a package which includes 7A, 31 and 75. The 31 and 75 are proposed to be recast, with revised frequency, better integration with the service 26 and a more efficient use of resources across the contracts. The peak journeys will be retained to provide access to work and education, with the changes focused on the off-peak. The changes will also extend the destinations to provide connections to Royston, timed to complement the service 26. The changes to these services will provide an overall improvement in the network and retain services to the communities currently served.
18	Retain with a focus on Tuesday service	This service currently provides two journeys per week to access shopping in Newmarket. The service levels have not recovered following Covid and reflects a wider trend for changes to travel habits, particularly for people using ENCTS passes. It is proposed to retain the Tuesday service, which provides access to the town for the main market day. This should be reviewed following changes to continue to provide a shopping service. This should be supported with promotion.

65	Retain, with improvements	The service has seen an improvement in passenger numbers, which reflects the reliability of the service. Proposals have been made by community members to provide further connection to the Buckden General Practitioners which may have a slight improvement on demand and connect the bus service to an important health centre. This change should be examined further to understand if there is an additional financial requirement to serve this need.
Ting	Retain with refocusing and further review.	The Ting DRT service is proposed to be retained and refocused. The early trial of the service has shown that while it can meet an important need, that the coverage and purpose has been quite broad. The operating model has led to services focusing in St Neots, delivering shorter journeys within the local area which is serviced by other routes, rather than a focus on the more rural communities which are not serviced by other routes. The proposal is to better serve the communities to the West of Huntingdonshire and limit the potential for journeys to start and end within St Neots. The refocusing will remove duplication with scheduled bus services and provide more availability to the rural communities. The potential for a CPCA-wide operating system will be considered, alongside other DRT trials, to enable the overhead cost (booking system etc) of running a DRT to be shared across services. The number of buses used to provide the service will be reviewed to ensure efficient use of resources. The review will enable the further consideration of the 400 and 401 services as all passenger journeys on those routes could be covered by Ting. These changes will be brought back to the January Board for decision.
301	Retain	It is proposed to retain the service in the current format, noting that a proposed improvement to the 305 is intended to support connectivity in the Ramsay area. Retaining the 301 in the current format and improving the 305 are intended to provide an overall improved bus service and attract more users.
305	Retain with improvements	The service will be improved to increase frequency and journey time. The approach would add one bus to the contract. After meeting with local councillors, there was clear feedback to focus on strengthening the Huntingdon – Ramsey and also connections to Chatteris. This approach will provide improved access to health, education, retail, job and entertainment facilities in Huntingdon.
150	Retain with further review following refocusing of the Ting service	The service is proposed to be retained. Further work is required to determine the best operational and contractual approach to the service. The proposed changes to Ting are expected to increase demand for this service. This will be further reviewed during 2024/25 to establish if demand has increased.
22A (300)	Retain with alignment to changes in commercial services	This service, known as the 300, has seen recent increase in use following changes to the commercial service, specifically serving a gap in the network for the Morrisons superstore and local area. This change to the commercial network indicates that the 22A is now providing access to a wider community and initial evidence shows demand has increased for the services. This service should be retained but kept under review to ensure the increase in demand is retained.

415	Retain in current form with review to utilise the existing Dial-a-Ride.	The level of service provided through the tendered contract is low, therefore limited scope to recast the service, and no additional communities which could generate demand for the service. Therefore, there are limited alternatives to improve the service. The service should be retained, with further engagement on the potential to utilise a dial-a-ride service. The advantage of this option would be a more flexible service. The use of a dial-a-ride option would require people to register for the service, then pre-book. This option would need to be communicated to ensure users are able to access the service.
33A	Retain with improvements	This service has been taken over by a new operator and as part of this change service changes were made. Data for the service since the operator has started shows that the cost per passenger journey has significantly decreased and is below the £12 benchmark. There is an opportunity to further improve the service with better alignment with the rail station in March, including enabling the bus to use the upgraded car park. The service is proposed to be retained, with further work between CPCA, Fenland District Council and the operators to achieve the improved access to rail services.
17	Retain with improvements	Following engagement with the operator, the service will be slightly retimed to provide a more integrated and attractive service. The current timetable is poorly aligned with the more frequent 26 bus service, which connects the communities to onward destinations, including Cambridge. The operator has also identified improvements to the route which will retain access to all current communities and also provide an improved operational route. It is expected that with the improved link to the 26 and associated re-timing, that the service will become a more attractive option for more people. There is emerging evidence of service improvements and increased passenger use, largely due to improved reliability of the service. This emerging evidence should be reviewed to understand the improvement in the cost per passenger is sustained over the next year.
12	Retain	This service is a single journey to provide an early morning peak trip to provide access for work. The contract has limited scope for change at it follows the commercial service 12, which operates for the rest of the day. This service should be retained but kept under review.
19	Retain, with further cross-boundary review	The service provides important access to employment and services and is performing reasonably well. While over the £12 cost per passenger benchmark, when taking the distance of the service into account it performs better. There are opportunities to better integrate the service with other cross-boundary services into Newmarket. This will require collaboration with neighbouring authorities to ensure the needs for communities in each authority area are met. It is proposed that CPCA continue to engage with neighbouring authorities to explore further alignment with the cross-boundary bus services to further improve the performance.
61	Retain	This service has been taken over by a new operator and as part of this retender service changes were made. The improvement in the performance is a combination of improved reliability and customer experience. The more recent cost per passenger figure is significantly below the £12 per passenger benchmark.

If agreed, each of the proposed changes will be progressed through to contracting. This will require either a new tender process or, where suitable, the extension of the existing contract.

2.8 Update on services requiring further information

The following summarises the status of the services for which data was not available for the September Board meeting.

Service	Recommendation	Justification
Citi4	Retain the service with no change.	Meeting a community need for the Cambourne community and cost per passenger journey is below £12. This is in line with recommendations made for the 51 services presented in September 2023.
22/22X	No decision, service to be brought to future board	The service needs a further review to explore options for the week and weekend service.
23/23A	No decision, service to be brought to future board	The data required to complete the assessment is not yet available
110	No decision, service to be brought to future board	The data required to complete the assessment is not yet available
203	No decision, service to be brought to future board	The data required to complete the assessment is not yet available

Officers continue to work with operators to get access to the required data and information to enable a recommendation to be made before the start of the next financial year. Subject to other decisions, the risk associated to these services will be managed to enable any contracting or tendering actions to be complete in a timely way. If data is not provided, CPCA officers are considering the option to terminate contracts and retender the services. While this option presents a risk of not finding an economically viable solution, the lack of data to inform decision making needs to be resolved.

2.9 Bus services identified through Bus Network Review

In addition to the review of existing bus services, the Bus Network Review has examined opportunities to provide some additional services. This has been based on the combination of community engagement and analysis by the CPCA and local authorities to identify underserved communities. The following summarises the proposed additional services which could be introduced to improve connectivity. For DRT trials, lessons from the existing Ting service will be used to inform the development of new trials and learning from each DRT used to improve all. Investment in these services is subject to sufficient budget being available. This issue is covered later in the report, under the BSIP+ options. It is proposed to invest part of the BSIP+ funding into the recommendations of the bus network review, including the proposed new services.

Communities	Proposal approach	Estimated budget
Wittering, Wansford, Caster	Introduce a new scheduled service to complement the Call Connect service. This could make use of an existing home to school bus contract.	£150,000 (2024/25)
Fenland DRT trial	Working with Fenland District Council, CPCA would develop a specification to better connect Wisbech and the surrounding communities. This service will focus on connecting the most rural communities to key services and amenities.	£300,000 (2024/25)

		This service could be funded from the current years allocation of BSIP+ for a service to commence in 2024/25.	
	East Cambridgeshire DRT trial	East Cambridgeshire District Council has identified two options for the introduction of a DRT trial. These are: 1. Burwell – Soham – Fordham – Isleham – Prickwillow - Ely 2. Mepal – Witcham – Wardy Hill – Coveney – Pymoor – Little Downham – Ely Officers will work together to agree the preferred way forward for a trial. This service could be funded from the current years allocation of BSIP+ for a service to commence in 2024/25.	£300,000 (2024/25)
	South Cambridgeshire DRT trial	Working with South Cambridgeshire District Council, CPCA would develop a specification to better connect the most poorly served communities. This service could be funded from the future BSIP+ allocation, for a service to commence in 2025/26.	£300,000 (2025/26)
2.10	<p>It is proposed that the scheduled bus service serving communities which include Wittering would be progressed to start at the beginning of the 2024/25 financial year. The three proposed DRT services are at different stages of development and therefore are proposed to be introduced in stages.</p> <p>It should be noted that the DRT services would be introduced as trials to understand if DRT can provide targeted bus services for more isolated communities and complement the scheduled services.</p>		
2.11	<p>BSIP+ Options</p> <p>CPCA and partners have been working to develop a draft BSIP. Ahead of the competition of the BSIP, the Department for Transport confirmed a revenue allocation for CPCA for this and next financial year. The total allocation was ~£4.6m. DfT has defined the types of interventions the funding is intended to be used for, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The funding must be spent on bus measures • Funding decisions should be based on local circumstances and need • The Authority can enhance the frequency of existing services, expand routes or provide new services using this funding • Ensuring existing connections are maintained • Ambitious new fares initiatives • The funding should not be used to support generic marketing or advertising 		
2.12	<p>As CPCA considers the future governance for bus services the allocation of BSIP+ is suggested to be considered in this context. To provide a focus for the investment it is proposed that CPCA sets the foundations and behaviours of an effective and community-focused transport authority. Then uses these two frames to invest into bus services. The following summarises the proposed foundations and behaviours for this allocation of BSIP+ funding.</p> <p>Foundations</p> <p>The foundations of an improved bus service have been discussed through the Bus Strategy and BSIP and can be summarised as:</p> <p>1) More bus services, 2) more integrated and available information, 3) more reliable services, 4) higher quality vehicles and 5) better value for money.</p> <p>Behaviours</p> <p>To demonstrate we can deliver on our ambition, we should start with a focus on the tendered services which we already contract. If we adopted this focus, then we could demonstrate the behaviours of a community-focused transport authority and secure better value for money for those services.</p>		

2.13 Allocate funding and/or resources against the five foundational activities. What this could mean:

- More bus services** – a significant allocation of BSIP+ into services, including securing the budget to support the recommendations of the Bus Network Review.
- More integrated and available information** – CPCA to ensure digital and on-street information for tender services is maintained and hard copy timetables are distributed
- More reliable services** – Work with operators on a driver recruitment plan and an allocation for bus traffic signal priority investment
- Higher quality vehicles** – Further submission to Zebra funding
- Better value for money** – Targeted ticketing schemes, new multi-operator ticket and requirement for tendered services to take part in fare schemes.

The next section sets out the proposed allocations against BSIP+ funding.

2.14 The following table sets out the actions and proposed budget allocation for each of the actions. The table also includes a Red, Amber, Green rating for the actions against the strategic fit, deliverability and impact of the end of the funding. The focus of the CPCA’s BSIP+ funding for the next financial year (2024/25) is on bus services, ticketing and information.

The assessment highlights that the impact of the end of BSIP+ funding is a risk which CPCA will need to manage, both through the introduction of new services and in planning for future budget setting. The introduction of new services will need to be carefully communicated to ensure the risks are understood.

Action	Proposed allocation	Multi-criteria scoring		
		Strategic: Makes buses more reliable, convenient and easy to use	Deliverable within 12 months	Impact of funding end
More bus services Increase tendered service budget to support existing and new services, including 2 new DRT services trials	£1.3m (£1m BSIP+ and 300k CPCA treasury management savings)	Green	Green	Amber
More integrated and available information Timetable back office, on-street bus stop investment and hard copy timetables for tendered services.	Total across this row £350k BSIP+	Green	Green	Amber
More reliable services Bus Driver recruitment Bus Signal Priority	£50k CPCA Skills funding £100k BSIP	Green	Green	Amber
Higher quality vehicles Prepare a submission to Zebra 2	No BSIP+ funding required, officer and operator time only	Green	Green	Green

	<p>Better value for money Establish new multi-operator ticket, Targeted fare scheme (young people/care leavers/companion passes)</p> <p>Requirement for tendered services to join fare schemes</p>	<p>Total across this row £550k BSIP+</p>			
	<p>Total BSIP+ allocation for 2024/25</p>	<p>£2.3m</p>			

2.15 **Further investment into bus services**

As part of developing the Bus Strategy, BSIP and bus network review, the potential focus for additional investment has been considered. The options align with the medium-term plan to consider bus reform and lessons learnt from the bus network review. Should additional funds become available to CPCA to support bus services the following initial actions are proposed. The options are a mix of capital and revenue activity.

- **Bus network review focused on near-commercially viable service.** The Bus Network Review has highlighted that there is a reasonable number of services which are close to commercial viability. It is proposed that with additional pump priming of services to enhance the frequency or service specification there is an opportunity to return some services to commercial operation. This approach is proposed to reduce the number of services which require subsidy, providing a more commercially viable network in the medium term. This proposal could provide an investment which improves bus services in the immediate term and then enables the funding to be reinvested into other services.
- **Transfer of remaining passenger services to CPCA.** There remains a number of services which are provided as passenger services, contracted by a local authority. As CPCA undertakes the work on Bus Reform, there is an opportunity to consider if CPCA takes on the contracts for other passenger services currently contracted by others. To take on the contracts, CPCA would require additional resources and also need to review the services to establish if changes or improvements are required. This would be progressed in 2024/25.
- **Bus depot feasibility** – As part of enabling operators to effectively serve the area there is a need for bus depot capacity, including the provision of capacity for electric vehicles. This activity will provide important enabling works if CPCA decided to proceed with franchising. In the context of an enhanced partnership, this initial activity can help provide the scope for expanding capacity for operators, while supporting local employment and housing development. The initial stage of this work would focus on site identification and preparation. This initial stage would ensure decision on bus reform are supported with appropriate bus depot infrastructure, regardless of proceeding to franchising or an enhanced partnership.
- **Bus stop infrastructure programme** – An initial allocation is proposed from BSIP+ to invest into on-street infrastructure and information. This initial allocation could be increased to expand the number of stops and shelters which are improved. This investment would help to raise the standard of on-street infrastructure. CPCA is not proposing to take ownership of assets currently owned and maintained by a range of parties. The role of CPCA will be to work with partners to secure and allocate funding to support the improvement of on-street infrastructure.

Each of the options are scalable, with an initial estimate of up to £10million suggested to support these activities. £2m-£3m of this funding would be revenue and £7m-£8m of the funding would be capital.

2.16 **ZEBRA 2**

The initial ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Regional Area) Scheme was a funding mechanism under which CPCA was awarded funds to help acquire and launch 30 zero emission buses. These were delivered in spring 2023 and are all now running very successfully in all-day service in Cambridge, significantly reducing vehicle emissions in the Authority’s biggest Air Quality Management Zone (AQMZ). The Department for Transport (DfT) has now announced a second funding round (ZEBRA 2) and the

	<p>Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority will be submitting a bid for ZEBRA 2 funding before the 15th December deadline.</p> <p>We are looking at a package of three components which we will build into a single bid. These components are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) A new bus depot in Peterborough with extensive electric bus recharging facilities, which we intend to be contractually shared between Peterborough's bus operators. 2) A fleet of new ZEBRA 2 buses to permit the decarbonisation of a number of Peterborough's bus services. 3) A small number of new ZEBRA 2 buses to increase the frequency and capacity of one Cambridge area bus service already run by Zero Emission vehicles.
2.17	<p>Bus Stop Audit</p> <p>Within the CPCA area there are a large number of bus stops which are not being maintained, and CPCA does not have the ownership or funding to co-ordinate improvements. Before CPCA can improve passenger comfort and convenience, the authority needs to establish how many bus stops may fall into the CPCA's remit; exactly where the stops are; and their condition. Therefore, CPCA is conducting an audit of all bus stops in the area and saving this accurate geo-located information into the DfT's NaPTAN database, from where it can be used to scale the size of our bus stop issues and act as a stepping stone to improving all our bus service data and that of third party journey planners. This activity will provide the foundations for future investment in information services and help to define the ownership and responsibilities for on-street infrastructure across the area.</p>
2.18	<p>National £2 fare cap</p> <p>Government recently announced the extension of the £2 fare cap scheme on bus fares within England. The scheme signifies a continued commitment by the government to maintain affordable public transportation until the end of 2024, diverging from the original termination date of 31 March 2023. Initially, there was a provisional extension set until the end of October 2023, followed by a proposed cap of £2.50 lasting until 30 November 2024. However, this trajectory was revised during the Conservative Party Conference, ensuring the £2 cap remains intact for a longer duration.</p> <p>This initiative, originally launched on 1 January 2022, underlines a sustained effort to ease the financial burden on commuters, fostering a more economically accessible public transport network across England.</p>

3. Background

3.1	<p>Bus Network Review</p> <p>The Bus Network Review is being undertaken to support decision on the future network. To inform the development of the approach, officers have reviewed the approach of other transport authorities, including Liverpool City Region, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, Hertfordshire, and Oxfordshire. All authorities consider the need for a service and the affordability of the service. Walking distance to a bus is the most common metric to establish need. Cost per passenger journey is also the most widely used metric for measuring the performance on contract.</p>
3.2	<p>All of these authorities shared the common challenges of managing the affordability of the network in the face of increasing pressures on local budgets. The approach undertaken for the Bus Network Review is largely consistent with the approach adopted by others.</p>

4. Appendices

4.1	Appendix A: Bus Network Review – Service Summaries
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5. Implications

Financial Implications

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| 5.1 | The total budget available to support bus services in 2023/24 is £7,598,432. Subject to decisions yet to be taken on the 2024/25 budget, the budget for the next financial year is expected to be £7,563,889. The current budget is funded through the Levy, Mayoral Precept, Bus Operator Service Grant and Bus Recovery Grant. The Bus Recovery Grant is not expected to be available in 2023/24. The Bus Recovery Grant funding represented £174,835 of the total budget. The recommendation for the 19 bus services contracts for 12 months from April 2024 is forecast to require further funding. |
| 5.2 | Subject to other Board decisions, the existing bus services budget is proposed to be further supplemented with funding from the CPCA's BSIP+ allocation, of up to £1million alongside a further £300,000 from the CPCA treasury management savings for bus services for the financial year 2024/25. The allocation of BSIP+ for supporting bus services includes an allowance for the expected price inflation of the existing tendered services which will be extended or retendered. The remaining £1.3m of BSIP+ funding is proposed to be invested in information systems and targeted ticketing schemes. There is a further allocation of BSIP funding of £2.3m for the following financial year. |
| 5.3 | The paper proposed actions which could be taken with further investment into buses. The paper identifies a mix of potential capital and revenue activity. Further financial implications on this matter will be brought forward if funding becomes available to support further investment into buses. |

Legal Implications

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| 6.1 | Following the evaluation of the bus service recommendations, there are legal implications to consider. For routes and services where performance and community needs align with current provision, the authority is positioned to extend contracts with existing operators where the terms can be extended. Where there is a need for enhanced services or the term of an existing contract has ended, it is required to initiate a transparent tendering process. The tender process will ensure that operators can competitively bid to provide the services, in compliance with procurement regulations. Contracts will be either extended or introduced for 12 months. |
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Public Health Implications

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| 7.1 | <p>The proposed recommendations concerning bus services, which encompass both enhancements and a few reductions, have overall positive public health implications. Retaining and improving bus services ensures residents maintain reliable access to healthcare, fostering timely medical interventions and regular health check-ups. This not only promotes physical well-being through increased daily activity from walking to bus stops but also supports cardiovascular health and counters rising obesity rates.</p> <p>Reliable bus services reduce feelings of isolation, particularly among vulnerable populations like the elderly. This improved social connectivity, in turn, supports mental well-being. Furthermore, encouraging the use of public transport over private vehicles can lead to a marked reduction in emissions, subsequently improving air quality and benefiting respiratory health among the community.</p> <p>The primary objective of these recommendations is to ensure both public health benefits and value for money are achieved. By striking a balance, the recommendations provide a bus network, while also acknowledging the indirect health benefits brought about by economic stability, job accessibility and access to essential services.</p> |
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Environmental & Climate Change Implications

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| 8.1 | Bus services play a pivotal role in mitigating environmental impacts and climate change. When effectively utilised, buses reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicles on the roads, leading to decreased traffic congestion and, consequently, reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Buses present a more sustainable mode of transportation, emitting fewer pollutants per passenger compared to cars. Encouraging the use of public buses can significantly contribute to our efforts to combat climate change, improve air quality, and reduce the carbon footprint of transport. |
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Other Significant Implications	
9.1	There are no other significant implications associate to the recommendations in this paper. Future implications of decisions on bus reform will be presented to the committee as required.
Background Papers	
10.1	13 September 2023 TIC meeting - Bus Network Review - Initial Recommendations