



## Officer Decision Record

### 1. Subject and details of the matter (to include reasons for the decision)

The Government has launched a new, long-term National Bus Strategy for England, outside London. Backed by more than £3 billion, the strategy will deliver cheaper, more frequent and more reliable bus services for passengers. The Government view buses as the unsung heroes of local transport and it is also viewed by the Government that rail steals much of the media limelight with over 50% of public transport journeys in the UK taking place by bus. Ensuring reliable, passenger-focussed system will therefore be crucial if the Government is to achieve ambitions of levelling up all communities after coronavirus. The Government advises the pandemic has had a significant impact on buses, as with all transport. It gives urgency to the strategy, but also an opportunity. Dealing with this emergency, the Government has seen how local authorities have fostered an even greater co-operation with local bus operators and have both remained committed throughout the pandemic to delivering essential public bus services. The spirit of co-operation is something the Government believes should be built on as we recover from the pandemic, as reliable bus services in North East Lincolnshire will be central to supporting the reopening of society, as communities start to return to their town and city centres for work and leisure. The Government advises we have a unique chance to change the way in which local bus services are planned and delivered, to bring significant long-term improvements for passengers. The Government would like to draw your attention to the below key elements of the strategy which will be of interest to ENGIE and North East Lincolnshire Council.

#### **Establishment of formal partnership or franchising arrangements for buses across all local authority areas outside London**

The Government wants every local transport authority (LTA) of which North East Lincolnshire Council is an LTA and bus operator in England to be in a statutory Enhanced Partnership or a franchising arrangement, using existing powers in the Bus Services Act 2017. These arrangements bring together the important skillsets and contributions of both parties, critical to a strong bus network. The Government expects to see a commitment to developing an Enhanced Partnership by the end of June 2021. LTAs will need to work with bus operators on targets for improving passenger numbers, reliability and passenger satisfaction in order to be eligible for future Government funding, including any further COVID-19 funding, any of the initial funding

we have in 2021/22 for bus improvement, or later tranches of the transformational £3 billion funding announced last February by the Prime Minister.

### **Delivering tangible improvements that will make buses easier, cheaper and more convenient to use**

While developing Enhanced Partnerships or franchising arrangements, the Government will be asking LTA's to produce new robust and ambitious Bus Service Improvement Plans by the end of October 2021. The Government expects the plans to set out a roadmap to better services for communities, urban and rural, and be fully informed by local needs. It will be for local areas to determine what is needed in their areas to drive up bus use. However, the Government expects LTAs and operators, working together, to provide:

- \* Cheaper single bus fares, with daily price caps, so people can use the bus as many times a day as they need without mounting costs.
- \* More integrated services and ticketing across all transport modes in an area, so people can easily move from bus to train.
- \* Easy to access information, including online, so that services are easier to use.
- \* Contactless payments on all buses.
- \* Easier access for disabled people onboard buses.

### **Supporting local authorities with the tools and capacity required**

Working together and sharing best practice, local authorities will be essential to the successful delivery of this strategy. The Government will make available £25 million for LTAs to develop their partnership schemes as well as BSIP development during 2021/22. The Government will also use this funding to support a programme to enhance the capabilities of local authorities on bus planning and delivery alongside local transport partners, including the development of the Bus Centre of Excellence. The centre is an initiative to bring together best practice, research and knowledge-sharing, an enhanced training offer for local authority officers and improved engagement between local authority members and bus operators.

The Government will be making available a £100k flat payment to assist local authorities, who request it, towards progressing an Enhanced Partnership. Further capacity funding will be available from the end of June once we have received the notices of intent. Local Authorities are required to notify the Department for Transport by 16 April 2021 if they wish to receive the £100k capacity funding.

### **Additional Information**

It is expected the National Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plans will positively contribute towards the following:

- NELC Carbon Reduction Strategy
- NELC Local Transport Plan (Strategy)
- NELC Climate Emergency
- Improved Air Quality
- Reduced Congestion

## 2. Is it a Key Decision as defined in the Constitution?

No.

## 3. Details of Decision

Officers are recommending Option 2, and in acknowledging the range of risks at this stage, would also recommend that we provide regular updates and briefings as we work through the development of the Enhanced Partnership, our understanding is developed and potential mitigations to manage risk are explored.

## 4. Is it an Urgent Decision? If yes, specify the reasons for urgency Urgent decisions will require sign off by the relevant scrutiny chair(s) as not subject to call in.

No.

## 5. Anticipated outcome(s)

Officers are given approval to claim a £100k flat payment from the Department for Transport to assist local authorities, towards progressing an Enhanced Partnership.

## 6. Details of any alternative options considered and rejected by the officer when making the decision

### Option 1 - Continue with the existing Voluntary Bus Quality Partnership.

The Government “expects” local authorities to move to the Enhanced Partnership Model. Officers have sought urgent clarification from the Department for Transport whether it is a statutory duty to move to the Enhanced Partnership model (as of 19/03/21 officers are awaiting an answer from DfT). If NELC do not move to the Enhanced Partnership model this has potential financial implications for the local authority as the Department for Transport are suggesting they will no longer pay local authorities and bus operators CBBSSG Grant and Bus Service Operators Grant.

### Option 2 – Follow Government guidance towards creating an Enhanced Partnership.

This option would meet the Government expectations recognising that there are a numbers of risks associated with this option (see risk assessment).

## 7. Background documents considered

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-back-better>

**8. Does the taking of the decision include consideration of Exempt information? If yes, specify the relevant paragraph of Schedule 12A and the reasons**

No.

**9. Details of any conflict of interest declared by any Cabinet Member who was consulted by the officer which relates to the decision (in respect of any declared conflict of interest, please provide a note of dispensation granted by the Council's Chief Executive)**

N/A

**10. Monitoring Officer Comments (Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer)**

The National Bus Strategy provides an opportunity to develop arrangements, in line with Government expectations and utilising available funding, to change the way in which local bus services are planned and delivered, to bring significant long-term improvements for passengers in our area. Consultation, engagement and partnership working will be key to develop the production of a bus service improvement plan.

**11. Section 151 Officer Comments (Deputy S151 Officer or nominee)**

As outlined within the ODR, the decision to accept available funding will provide £100k to set up an Enhanced Partnership Model which will also help secure existing ongoing grant funding of £111k per annum.

The partnership arrangement may though come with additional potential costs (e.g. additional subsidy for cheaper fares) which will only become clearer as the partnership develops.

**12. Human Resource Comments (Strategic Workforce Lead or nominee)**

As outlined in the ODR engagement and partnership working will be key to develop the production of the bus service improvement plan, where this affects the workforce then appropriate consultation and engagement will take place ensuring Council policies and procedures and legislation are followed.

**13. Risk Assessment (in accordance with the Report Writing Guide)**

**Finance** - If NELC do not move to the Enhanced Partnership model this has potential financial implications for the Council as the Department for Transport are suggesting they will no longer pay local authorities and bus operators CBBSG Grant (21/22 - £94,000) and Bus Service Operators Grant (£17,000 per annum). If local authorities do not move to the Enhanced Partnership model it is envisaged the Council will not be able to access future funding opportunities linked to the National Bus Strategy.

**Capacity and Resources** - The Government are offering LTA's a flat payment of £100k to set up the Enhanced Partnership. It is envisaged a consultant could be procured for this work, additional members of staff could be provided by ENGIE to backfill existing team members or a reprioritisation of our existing staff would need to be agreed between ENGIE and NELC. Without the ability to backfill existing members of staff or reprioritise existing workload, it is envisaged there will not be sufficient capacity to deliver the ongoing requirements of the Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plans (annual 6-month progress reports which will need to be published by NELC). Based upon existing working practices, it is expected local authorities will take on the majority of the workload in delivering the Enhanced Partnership Model and the existing transport team has very limited capacity to take on additional work.

**Bus Service Improvement Plans** - It is envisaged the £100k payment will allow LTA's to deliver the Bus Service Improvement Plans by October 2021 and the plans will need to be deliverable from 1 April 2022. It is envisaged a consultant could be procured for this work, additional members of staff could be provided by ENGIE to backfill existing team members or a reprioritisation of our existing staff would need to be agreed between ENGIE and NELC.

**Outcomes from Bus Service Improvement Plans** - Key Council policies such as NELC Car Parking Strategy (including car parking pricing) and Planning Policy are both linked to bus passenger numbers (Government Priority through the Strategy is to increase bus passenger numbers). If these key strategies are not taken into consideration as part of the Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plans, this is likely to impact upon how successful the National Bus Strategy and Bus Services Improvement Plan measures are in North East Lincolnshire. It is unclear how much funding local authorities will have available to deliver Bus Service Improvement Plans or how long the funding will be available for. If the Government funding is only for a one year period, the improvements may not be commercially viable after one year and could be withdrawn by the bus operators. If this occurs, the local authority could be left with the additional day to day requirements of the Enhanced Partnership but without the bus service improvements. The National Bus Strategy also refers to demand responsive transport (Phone n Ride) and the possible requirements to deliver such services.

**Bus Service Improvement Plans (deliverables)** - As part of the Bus Service Improvement Plans, some of the measures may not be achievable. For example, the Scartho Bus Lane has just been removed and the Government are proposing local authorities deliver new and additional bus priority measures such as bus lanes. It is

unclear at the current time if local bus companies will have any match funding towards local bus service improvements. Traditionally, local authorities and bus companies work together to fund bus service improvements.

**Requirement to consult** - It is envisaged there will be an ongoing requirement to consult “local people” and local user groups and this will impact upon the existing resources within the ENGIE Transport Team. It is envisaged a consultant could be procured for this work, additional members of staff could be provided by ENGIE to backfill existing team members or a reprioritisation of our existing staff would need to be agreed between ENGIE and NELC.

**Performance expectations** - Setting passenger growth targets without having the ability to fully external factors such as Local Transport Strategy (e.g. Town Centre Transport Strategy), Planning Policy, Traffic and Demand Management Policies and Car Parking Strategy (including pricing) will limit the success of the National Bus Strategy and Bus Service Improvement Plans. Should the existing NELC policies remain, it is likely bus passenger numbers will continue to decline in North East Lincolnshire and this is likely to result in a reduction in local bus services in North East Lincolnshire within the short to medium term.

**14. Decision Maker(s):**

Name: Mark Nearney

Title: Assistant Director of Housing,  
Highways and Planning

Signed: Approved via email

Dated: 19<sup>th</sup> April 2021

**15. Consultation carried out with  
Portfolio Holder(s):**

Name: Cllr Stewart Swinburn

Title: Portfolio Holder for Environment  
and Transport

Signed: Approved via email

Dated: 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021

**16. If the decision is urgent then  
consultation should be carried out  
with the relevant Scrutiny  
Chair/Mayor/Deputy Mayor**

Name: N/A

Title: N/A

Signed: N/A

Dated: N/A

## APPENDIX 1 – Email Approval

From: Cllr Stewart Swinburn (NELC) <Stewart.Swinburn@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Sent: 21 April 2021 13:52  
To: Jonathan Ford (Engie) <Jonathan.Ford@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Cc: Mark Nearney (NELC) <Mark.Nearney@nelincs.gov.uk>; Martin Lear (Engie) <Martin.Lear@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Subject: RE: National Bus Strategy - Officer Decision Record

Thanks Jonathan,

I am happy with this and it has my approval,

Regards  
Cllr Swinburn

From: Jonathan Ford (Engie) <Jonathan.Ford@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Sent: 19 April 2021 13:04  
To: Cllr Stewart Swinburn (NELC) <Stewart.Swinburn@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Cc: Mark Nearney (NELC) <Mark.Nearney@nelincs.gov.uk>; Martin Lear (Engie) <Martin.Lear@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Subject: National Bus Strategy - Officer Decision Record

Dear Cllr Swinburn,

Please find attached an Officer Decision Record (ODR) in relation to the National Bus Strategy for your review and approval.

The attached ODR has been approved by Mark Nearney (see email below) and seeks approval to claim the £100k flat payment to assist local authorities, towards progressing an Enhanced Bus Quality Partnership.

I would be happy to discuss if you require further explanation or clarification.

Kind Regards,

Jonathan Ford CMILT  
Senior Transport Officer  
Highways and Transport  
Places & Communities North – NEL  
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Tel. +44 01472 32 4481  
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New Oxford House, George Street,  
Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire, DN31 1HB

From: Mark Nearney (NELC) <Mark.Nearney@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Sent: 19 April 2021 12:42  
To: Jonathan Ford (Engie) <Jonathan.Ford@nelincs.gov.uk>  
Subject: FW: National Bus Strategy

Approved

Yes, I am.

Need to send approval email through to Dem Services to be logged.

Ta

Mark Nearney, Assistant Director of Housing, Highways and Planning  
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