

CABINET- 26 OCTOBER 2021

CABINET RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS SELECT COMMITTEE

BUSES BACK BETTER

Recommendations:

Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee support the County Council's intention to produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan and the creation of an Enhanced Partnership Scheme, both of which are a National Bus Strategy requirement and commends the extensive range of ambitious initiatives contained in the Report, while also recommending that:

- i. Serious consideration be given to reducing bus fares (at least on some routes to begin with) as stipulated in the Government's Policy document and in order to make bus travel for Surrey residents a more viable and better value option compared to driving a car.
- ii. Family discount and other concessions (U18s, U16s, etc.) bus fares be considered as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).
- iii. Any app for passengers includes information on the location of the expected service and the next available bus on the map.
- iv. The scope, terms of reference etc. for the Partnership Governance Board and the Stakeholder Reference Group are rigorously defined and delineated to help ensure the credibility and effectiveness of the Enhanced Partnership.
- v. Actively pursue the process, wherever possible, to make all Surrey buses to run on non-fossil fuel.
- vi. Better communication, awareness and publicity campaign as part of the wider Greener Future piece.

John O'Reilly

Chairman of the Communities, Environment & Highways Select Committee

Cabinet Response:

I would like to thank the Chairman and Members of the Communities, Environment and Highways Select Committee for scrutinising our work to produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan as presented to Cabinet.

We are at a point where we have an exciting opportunity to work with our bus operators, bus users, partners and Government to improve public transport and get more people using buses in Surrey.

Buses provide residents with access to a wide range of key service, including employment, education, health care and essential shopping, with our contracted services supporting those provided commercially. Putting buses at the heart of our new and emerging Surrey Transport Plan, the delivery of which is key to our Greener Futures Programme, is key to providing a realistic and attractive alternative to the private car. This will help us reduce the 46% of carbon emissions that come from the transport sector in the county, forming part of our pathway to net zero carbon.

The issues raised by the Select Committee are extremely pertinent and accord with our own thinking. Our Bus Service Improvement Plan and the associated funding ask from Government includes proposals for:

- Simpler fare structures
- Reduced fares for young people
- Multi-journey, multi-operator ticket schemes
- Better information, including journey planning websites, apps, roadside and printed information
- More real time passenger information
- The introduction of more ultra-low and zero emission buses.

There is much more detail in the Bus Service Improvement Plan itself. The Cabinet report also highlights the clear linkages of this work with key County Council strategies, including:

- Surrey's Greener Future
- Our new Surrey Transport Plan, which contains a proposed hierarchy of modes and an ambition to shift journeys from the private car to other more sustainable modes, including buses
- Our 2030 Community Vision
- Our ambition for a carbon neutral county by 2050.

In respect to the proposed governance structure for our Enhanced Partnership, we will ensure the Board, Delivery Group and Stakeholder Reference Group all have clear terms of reference and defined roles. This will ensure efficient and effective ways of working and delivery, the details of which will be developed and agreed as the Enhanced Partnership is established.

Overall, this council is responding strongly, positively, and proactively to the challenge set by the Government in Bus Back Better and we are passionate about improving bus services for our residents and businesses.

Matt Furniss
Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure
26 October 2021