

From: David Brazier, Cabinet Member, Highways and Waste  
Simon Jones, Interim Corporate Director, Growth, Environment & Waste

To: Environment & Transport – 29 June 2021

Decision No: N/A – For information only

Subject: **Decisions taken between Cabinet Committee Meetings**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Future Pathway of Paper:** N/A

**Electoral Division:** County-wide

**Summary:** The attached decision was taken between meetings of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee as it could not be reasonably deferred to the next programmed meeting of the Cabinet Committee for the reasons set out in paragraph 2.3 below.

**Recommendation:**

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note that the following decision was taken between meetings of the Cabinet Committee in accordance with the process set out in the Council's constitution:

21/00043: Enhanced Bus Partnerships

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport has taken decision 21/00043 to agree to publish the statutory notice of KCC's intention to form an Enhanced Partnership (EP) for bus services in Kent with local bus operators.
- 1.2 The decision was taken between meetings of the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee, as it could not reasonably be deferred due to the reasons set out in paragraph 2.3.

**2. Background to decision**

- 2.1 On 15 March, the Department for Transport published its National Bus Strategy, "*Bus Back Better*". The Strategy acknowledges the role the bus can play in achieving a net zero emission society and commits national government to supporting bus and bus rapid transit schemes.

- 2.2 The Strategy is aimed at seeing passengers benefiting from “more frequent, more reliable, easier to use, easier to understand, better coordinated and cheaper bus services” and sets out an ambitious timetable for delivery.
- 2.3 Under the Strategy, to maintain access to current funding and access future funding opportunities, KCC as the Local Transport Authority was required to commit to the introduction of Enhanced Partnerships with local bus operators by 1 July 2021. It is this timetable, and the potential impact on current funding that has required the decision to be taken before discussion by this Cabinet Committee.
- 2.4 Enhanced Partnerships were introduced under the Bus Services Act 2017 and will take the form of an agreement between Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) and bus operators to work together to improve bus services through a Bus Service Improvement Plan. (BSIP). At the time of writing no guidance has been published on what a BSIP is required to contain.
- 2.5 The decision to issue the required statutory notice of the intention to form an Enhanced Partnership does not commit KCC to any financial implications whilst the BSIPs are being developed. The BSIP must be published by the end of October 2021 and will be subject to a further key decision before submission to the DfT who will then advise Kent’s funding allocation. Further papers will be submitted to Cabinet Committee at appropriate stages including those that include proposals for investment by KCC.
- 2.6 As set out in paragraph 2.3, in signing up to a partnership, KCC will be able to maintain receipt of current bus funding and gain access to new funding. Current funding to the bus industry comprises Bus Services Operator’s Grant (BSOG) and Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG). The latter is support funding being provided by government to operators to ensure the future provision of a full bus network, whilst demand is subdued by the pandemic.
- 2.7 KCC receives £1.1m BSOG annually which is used to support supported bus services/public transport projects. If KCC did not commit to establishing an enhanced partnership, the financial risk is the annual BSOG of £1.1m and CBSSG funding of £1.6m.
- 2.8 If the funding reduction was also applied to operators by national government, then a further annual BSOG of £5.9m is at risk plus an unknown sum of CBSSG.

### **3. Recommendation(s)**

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note that the following decision was taken between meetings of the Cabinet Committee in accordance with the process set out in the Council’s constitution:

21/00043: Enhanced Bus Partnerships

#### 4. Background Documents

- Record of Decision: 21/00043: Enhanced Bus Partnerships;  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2488>

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