

Update Note regarding Warwickshire's Bus Services

To: Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 The key findings in the Warwickshire Bus Services Motion Report, including the proposed Bus Services Motion Enhancement Schedule at Appendix A of this report, were noted by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered at their meeting on 23 September 2020;
- 1.2 This briefing paper aims to update the Communities OSC Committee on the progress made delivering improvements to Warwickshire's bus services.

2. Recovery from the Covid-19 Pandemic:

- 2.1 During the peak of the covid-19 pandemic many bus services were reduced, and patronage was at a substantially reduced level, i.e., decreasing by approximately 80% on some services.
- 2.2 However, since the relaxation of covid restrictions bus patronage has steadily increased with patronage on most services approximately 70% of pre-pandemic levels. Whilst patronage from concessionary passholders in Warwickshire is approximately 55% of pre-pandemic levels.
- 2.3 It is understood that Government will allocate funding to continue the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) post March 2022 when it is due to cease. The BRG superseded the Covid-19 Bus Services Support Grant in August 2021 established to support commercial bus operators in England due to the ongoing impacts of coronavirus, which include reduced revenue generation caused by the substantial fall in patronage. Continuation of the funding should avert the risk of commercial bus services being reduced and pressure borne on local authorities to meet the cost of maintaining service frequency.

3. Coventry All Electric Bus City Scheme:

- 3.1 In March 2021, the West Midlands Combined Authority obtained a £49.900million contribution from the DfT to the £140.000million Coventry All Electric Bus City Scheme, which aims to upgrade the Coventry bus fleet with up to 300 no. zero emission all-electric buses including those operated on cross boundary routes serving all 5 no. Borough / District areas in Warwickshire. This will make Coventry the UK's first all-electric bus city upon scheme completion at the end of the 5-year programme in 2024-25.

- 3.2 As part of the overall Scheme, Cabinet approved a £1.366million contribution from the WCC Capital Investment Fund towards the projected £5.462million cost of providing supporting on-street charging infrastructure at locations covering all 5 no. Borough / District areas in Warwickshire.
- 3.3 In January 2022, National Express West Midlands and the West Midlands Combined Authority announced procurement of the first 130 no. all-electric buses which are due to go into service early in 2023. Transport for West Midlands are working with Coventry City Council to create the necessary charging infrastructure to power the new all-electric buses in Coventry. This will include upgrades to bus depots and charging points at Pool Meadow Bus Station.
- 3.4 National Express West Midlands are set to order further all-electric buses at a later stage in the 5-year programme, as is the case with Stagecoach Midlands, Johnsons Coaches, A&M Group and other operators running cross boundary services into Warwickshire.
- 3.5 It has been agreed that the cross-boundary elements of the Coventry All Electric Bus City Scheme in Warwickshire, i.e., procurement of all-electric buses by bus operators and provision of supporting on-street charging infrastructure will come on stream from 2023-24. WCC officers will seek funding opportunities to secure delivery of bus priority measures to further support the operation of all-electric buses by reducing journey times.

4. DfT Rural Mobility Fund – Pilot Demand Responsive Transport Scheme

- 4.1 In January 2021, the County Council submitted a successful bid for £1.020million from the DfT Rural Mobility Fund, which is aimed at assessing the benefits of on-demand services to improve existing bus provision in rural and suburban areas. The DfT funding contributes to a pilot Scheme anticipate costing £1.752million over a 5-year period, with the remaining £0.752million funding contributions being met by a combination of a Section 106 developer contribution the WCC Transport Delivery Team's revenue budget.
- 4.2 The pilot DRT service will launch in February 2022 and serve rural settlements to the west of Warwick (including Beausale, Budbrooke, Haseley, Hatton and Leek Wootton) and parts of Kenilworth, and will replace the conventional Service 16 (Warwick – Leamington) bus operation. The pilot DRT Service will include the launch of a mobile phone app enabling residents to book their journeys, like Uber when booking taxi journeys, albeit the service will pick up residents as close as possible to their desired meeting point. A designated call centre will also be in operation enabling residents to book their journeys.

5. Bus Back Better (National Bus Strategy for England except London):

- 5.1 The National Bus Strategy was published in March 2021 tied to a £3billion fund allocated by Government to transform bus travel outside London. The Strategy aims to boost bus patronage to pre-pandemic levels and beyond by encouraging further partnership working between local authorities and bus operators in the

form of Enhanced Partnerships. The key actions for the County Council arising from National Bus Strategy were as follows:

- Commit towards Enhanced Partnership;
- Publish a Local Bus Service Improvement Plan by October 2021; and
- Enhanced Partnerships should be in place by April 2022

5.2 The actions must be carried out to ensure the County Council is eligible to receive new sources of bus funding arising from the Government's £3billion budget, and to continue to receive ongoing funding, e.g., Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), concessionary fare reimbursement and further sources of funding to support the operation of commercial and contracted bus services during the pandemic.

5.3 The National Bus Strategy placed emphasis on delivering bus priority measures, low emission buses, high service frequency bus corridors supported by demand-responsive feeder services, improved bus information, enhanced ticketing (including multi-operator), cheaper fares and traffic management measures for the benefit of passengers. The County Council was in an advantageous position due to work already carried out in terms of the Warwickshire Bus Services Motion Report and associated Warwickshire Bus Services Motion Enhancement Schedule, which included measures promoted in the National Bus Strategy, being a Scheme partner in the Coventry All Electric Bus City Scheme and receiving funding to deliver a pilot DRT service through the DfT Rural Mobility Fund.

6.0 Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan:

6.1 Following a Motion (Bus Services in Warwickshire) put forward to Full Council on 1 July 2021, it was agreed that the Council set up a Cross-Party Working Group to draw up a fully costed Warwickshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for consideration by Cabinet in October 2021, prior to publication. The Cross-Party Working Group supported WCC officers and bus operators in producing the Warwickshire BSIP. This included raising awareness and encouraging participation in the Warwickshire Bus Services Improvement Survey public engagement exercise where 1,653 survey responses were received, which helped shape the Warwickshire BSIP.

6.2 The Warwickshire BSIP acts a shop window setting out what Warwickshire wants to achieve through a proportion of the £3billion funding from Government. The Warwickshire BSIP presents a realistic programme of high and medium priority schemes agreed with bus operators that can be delivered within the 3-year timeframe 2022-23 to 2024-25, which included all the measures in the Bus Services Motion Enhancement Schedule.

6.3 Targets have also been set in the Warwickshire BSIP focused on increasing Passenger Satisfaction, achieving Passenger Growth, improving bus punctuality and reducing bus journey times. The Warwickshire BSIP has been costed at £216.450million covering a 3-year timeframe period. The Warwickshire BSIP stipulated a funding requirement of £152.824million, which is currently being considered by the DfT who expect to provide details of indicative funding by

February 2022. A breakdown of projected costs over the 3-year period is presented in Table 1 below:

| Table 1: Warwickshire BSIP Cost Breakdown (2022/23 – 2024/25) | Projected Cost £m |
|---|--------------------------|
| <u>Projected Cost of the Warwickshire BSIP Programme of 2022-23 to 2024-25:</u> | |
| Capital Funding Requirement | £164.797 |
| Revenue Funding Requirement | £51.653 |
| Total | £216.450 |
| <u>Breakdown of Projected Funding Contributions Covering the Costed Warwickshire BSIP Programme 2022-23 to 2024-25:</u> | |
| Warwickshire County Council Existing Secured Funding, e.g., Bus Services Revenue Support Budget and Capital Investment Fund | £9.935 |
| Bus Operator Contribution | £24.438 |
| Other Sources of External Funding, e.g., DfT Rural Mobility Fund and S106 developer contributions | £29.253 |
| Requested BSIP Funding Requirement from the DfT | £152.824 |
| Total | £216.450 |

6.4 From the £3billion funding set aside by the Government, a proportion has already been ringfenced to deliver zero emission buses and City Region Sustainable Transport Settlements that will directly fund bus infrastructure. The sum of approximately £1.5billion will be made available to support the transformation agenda promoted in BSIPs over the next three years. The DfT acknowledges that prioritisation will be inevitable, given the scale of the ambition across the country greatly exceeds this amount. The other £1.5billion has been directed at supporting the bus industry during the Covid-19 pandemic, e.g., Covid-19 Bus Service Support Grant (CBSSG) and Bus Recovery Grant (BRG).

7. Warwickshire Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan and first Warwickshire EP Scheme:

7.1 A Warwickshire EP Board has been formed to steer the development and delivery of the EP Plan and Schemes. The Board is independently chaired by Claire Walters (Chief Executive of Bus Users UK), who has the same role for a pre-existing EP Scheme in the West Midlands conurbation area. The County Council, bus operators and the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP) are also represented on the Board.

7.2 An Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan and the first Warwickshire EP Scheme have been produced in partnership with bus operators in November 2021. The EP Plan is based on the content of the Warwickshire BSIP and Plan sets out the overall vision and objectives to improve bus services. The EP Scheme gives details on the measures we plan to implement to meet some of the objectives in the EP Plan. These are based on standard and practical '*business as usual*' measures to ensure that they can be formally agreed with bus operators by April

2022 without difficulty in acknowledgement of the pressurised timescale put forward by the DfT. These measures are as follows:

- Launch of a pilot DRT service (co-funded by DfT Rural Mobility Fund);
- Launch of a Warwickshire Bus Passenger Charter;
- Define minimum standards for information (improvements to roadside information);
- Develop a marketing campaign, supplemented by the production of a Bus Information Guide;
- Define vehicle quality standards;
- Parking policy and enforcement;
- Develop guidelines for large new developments;
- Review of S106 contributions;
- Maintenance of network, including a network review; and
- Feasibility studies for supportive policies, i.e., Workplace Parking Levy, Red Routes and Road User Charging.

- 7.3 The two documents were subject to a statutory minimum 28-day bus operator objection mechanism period between Monday 6 December 2021 – Sunday 2 January 2022 where no objections regarding content were raised. Subsequently, the two documents are currently subject of a statutory WCC led consultation with the wider community branded '*Warwickshire's Vision for Bus Travel*' running between Tuesday 4 January 2022 – Tuesday 1 February 2022 (inclusive). It is important to note that no changes can be made to the documents as an outcome of the consultation process, without requiring the respective statutory processes to be restarted, which would have severe impact on the project programme.
- 7.4 The two documents will be presented in reports to Corporate Board in February 2022 and Cabinet in March 2022 seeking approval for the County Council to enter an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators by the end of April 2022.
- 7.5 The two documents will then be subject to a variation process to enable minor amendments to be made to arising from:
- Comments received during the operator objection mechanism period;
 - Further details on standards (e.g., for on-street bus information) agreed with bus operators; and
 - Include additional information arising from a BSIP Funding and EP Timescales notification letter issued to Local Transport Authorities by the DfT on 11 January 2022.
- 7.6 It is hoped that an updated Warwickshire EP Plan and first EP Scheme in draft form (and not subjected to consultation) will be issued to the DfT by the end of April 2022 for review. Their feedback will support the full completion of the updated documents prior to being subject to consultation and resubmission to the DfT for final approval.

8. Further Warwickshire EP Schemes

8.1 The real exciting and transformational measures will feature in the second and third EP Schemes, which are currently under development in partnership and will include the following:

- Second EP Scheme - Bus priority measures (including all-electric buses as referred to in paragraph 3.5), real time information, audio and visual equipment on buses, countywide multi-operator bus ticket, tap on / tap off card technology on buses on the north / south bus corridor improvements Nuneaton - Bedworth - Coventry - Kenilworth - Leamington - Warwick - Stratford-upon-Avon plus the Rugby A426 Leicester Road super-stop; and
- Third EP Scheme - improvements to bus service frequency and the subsidised bus network, and proliferation of demand responsive transport services and improved integration (including creation of mobility hubs in rural areas).

8.2 The measures in the Bus Services Motion Enhancement Schedule at Appendix A of this report are included in the first three EP Schemes, except for the following, which were rated as a lower priority in liaison with bus operators, and thus, either be included in a later EP Scheme funding permitting or will need to implement separately:

- Annual 'Warwickshire' Bus Conference;
- New Bus Links to Birmingham International Airport / NEC / UK Central; and
- Provision of Park and Ride in Leamington for the Commonwealth Games.

IndieGo Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) Services:

9.1 The County Council has launched IndieGo DRT services in 2020-21 which serve the following communities:

- Rural hinterland around the Atherstone area (providing direct journeys to and from Atherstone)
- Rural hinterland surrounding Coleshill (providing direct journeys to and from Coleshill, Coleshill Parkway Rail Station and Hams Hall at key shift change times); and at a later stage
- Rural hinterland in the Rugby Borough area, (providing direct journeys to and from Rugby).

9.2 IndieGo is a minibus dial-a-ride Scheme serving at residents who are unable to make their journey by conventional public transport due to mobility issues and/or no direct accessibility to public transport in their area. The wheelchair accessible service provides journeys to work, access to medical appointments at GPs and hospitals, access to retail and leisure amenities. Residents are required to register for use of the service and book journeys via call centre.

9.3 The WCC Transport Delivery Team plan to undertake promotional activity raising awareness of the IndieGo services in tandem with the forthcoming launch of a pilot DRT service co-funded by the DfT Rural Mobility Fund.

9.4 The IndieGo DRT services were the subject of an Expression of Interest (EOI) submission developed by County Council officers in collaboration with the WCC

Communities and Partnerships Team regarding the 'Tackling Loneliness with Transport' fund, which was recently launched by the DfT. Local Authorities are invited to apply for grants of up to £0.500million to pilot projects that aim to reduce loneliness through the provision of transport schemes. The EOI was submitted to the DfT in January 2022.

- 9.5 The proposed Tackling Loneliness with Transport Scheme will focus on enhancing the IndieGo DRT services in North Warwickshire and Rugby Borough by way of the following:
- Enabling residents to also book their journeys via a mobile phone app and online; and
 - Extending the hours of operation.

Nigel Whyte
WCC Transport Planning
1 February 2022

Appendix A

| Bus Services Motion Enhancement Schedule | | | |
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| Item | Measure | Projected Cost of Delivery | Forecasted Completion |
| 1 | <p><u>How to use the Bus Information Guide:</u> Design and printing a Guide encouraging people to use bus services and to help increase confidence in travelling by bus.</p> | £0.010m | June 2021 |
| 2 | <p><u>Better Roadside Publicity:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly Improved Roadside Paper Based Bus Information; • Enhanced Standalone Roadside Timetable Software; • Launch of 100 no. Desirable Solar Panelled Digital Roadside Information; and • Maintenance and Upkeep Costs during period. | £ 0.568m | December 2021 |
| 3 | <p><u>Planning Policy Guidance:</u> Collaboration with Borough/District Councils and bus operators to create a set of guidelines for large new developments in Warwickshire, ensuring they are bus-friendly early in the design process.</p> | £0.025m | December 2020 |
| 4 | <p><u>Annual 'Warwickshire' Bus Conference:</u> Involving bus operators, local authorities and the public sector organisations across Warwickshire to discuss bus issues and actions to resolve concerns.</p> | £0.030m | November 2021 |
| 5 | <p><u>New Bus Links to Birmingham International Airport / NEC / UK Central</u> Launch of new bus services and/or extension of existing services</p> | £1.310 million (over 5 years) | March 2022 |
| 6 | <p><u>Warwick – Leamington - Coventry Corridor Enhanced Partnership:</u> Bus operators provide improved vehicles and the County Council provides supporting infrastructure including bus priority measures, real time information and multi-operator bus ticketing.</p> | WCC Contribution: £3.150m | March 2022 |
| 7 | <p><u>Introduce a Countywide Multi-Operator</u></p> | £0.200m | March 2022 |

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| | <u>Day Ticket</u> Launch and operation of bus ticket encompassing all bus services in Warwickshire | | |
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| 8 | <u>Southbound bus stop on Leicester Road (A426) opposite Elliott's Field Retail Park in Rugby</u> Provision of an elongated bus lay-by holding two full-length buses and a high-quality bus shelter. | £0.492m | March 2022 |
| 9 | <u>Expansion of DRT Provision and Technology</u> Launch of further demand responsive bus services with journeys bookable via mobile app, internet or telephone. | £2.000m | March 2022 |
| 10 | <u>Provision of Park and Ride in Leamington for the Commonwealth Games</u> Launch of a temporary Park and Ride service reducing the number of car journeys into Leamington Town Centre, with potential to be made permanent. | £0.800m | March 2022 |
| Total Projected Cost | | £8.585million | |