

<b>CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL</b>	<b>Cabinet</b> <b>19 February 2020</b>
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<b>Report title</b>	Enhanced Partnership for Bus in the West Midlands	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Steve Evans City Environment	
<b>Key decision</b>	Yes	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All Wards	
<b>Accountable Director</b>	Ross Cook, Director of City Environment	
<b>Originating service</b>	City Environment	
<b>Accountable employee</b>	Tim Philpot	Professional Lead, Transport Strategy
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<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	Not applicable	

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**Recommendations for decision:**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the development of an Enhanced Bus Partnership for bus services in the West Midlands in conjunction with Transport for West Midlands, other local authorities and local bus operators.
2. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for City Environment, in consultation with the Director for City Environment, to “make” the Enhanced Partnership Plan, subject to complying with the statutory preparation, notice and consultation on the Enhanced Partnership.
3. Delegate authority to Cabinet Member for City Environment in consultation with the Director for City Environment to approve the details of any contracts or agreements necessary for implementation of an Enhanced Bus Partnership.

**Recommendation for noting:**

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. That participation in the development of the Enhanced Partnership and making of the Enhanced Partnership Plan cannot commit the Council to future Enhanced Partnership Schemes without their agreement.

## **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 This report informs Cabinet on the development of an Enhanced Bus Partnership in the West Midlands and recommends that the Council agree to participate and make the Enhanced Partnership Plan.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Strategic Vision for Bus (adopted by the WMCA Board on 9 November 2018) clearly sets out the objective to achieve modal shift by providing exceptional service and reliability, along with comfort and accessibility for passengers.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 28 June 2019, the West Midlands Combined Authority Board gave approval for Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) to proceed with the development of an Enhanced Partnership (EP) and using an EP for the delivery of Sprint in readiness for the Commonwealth Games.
- 2.3 An EP is a formal agreement between a local transport authority, local highway authorities and local bus operators to work together to improve local bus services. It requires a clear vision for the improvements that the EP is delivering, known as the EP Plan and at least one EP Scheme, which sets out the actions, requirements and commitments to achieve the improvements within the Plan. The local transport authority has formal responsibility for “making” the EP, but at set points in the process they can only proceed with the EP if they have the support of a defined proportion of local bus operators.
- 2.4 TfWM issued the notice of intent to prepare an EP Plan for the area of the WMCA and two EP Schemes on the 17 July 2019. The EP Plan covers the Area of the West Midlands Combined Authority (excluding the Wolverhampton City Centre Advanced Quality Partnership Scheme (AQPS) and the other two AQPS areas due to the way the legislation is written and applied, as they cannot both apply within the same geography).
- 2.5 Although the notice was issued for two EP Schemes, through the preparation of the EP it has been decided to develop a single EP Scheme covering the two corridors of the A34 and A45 / Lode Lane.
- 2.6 TfWM issued a further notice that an EP Plan and accompanying EP Scheme had been prepared on 20 December 2019, giving the operators until 24 January 2020, to register any objection to either the EP Plan or Scheme. No objections were received for either the EP Plan or Scheme, allowing the EP to proceed to the formal (public) consultation.
- 2.7 On 4 November 2019, the WMCA Transport Delivery Committee approved the Consultation Strategy for the EP Plan and associated EP Scheme, and approved TfWM proceeding to formal (public) consultation, subject to sufficient operator support.

### **3.0 Discussion**

- 3.1 The EP Plan is based on TfWM's Strategic Vision for Bus objectives clearly sets out the objective to achieve modal shift by providing exceptional service and reliability, along with comfort and accessibility for passengers. The introduction of the first Sprint corridors provides a major opportunity for investment by the public and private sectors to achieve a step change in public transport that will set the foundations for benefits and improvements to bus services across the integrated transport system throughout the West Midlands, which is the basis for the EP Scheme.
- 3.2 The proposed EP Plan contains the objectives for Sprint specific schemes for the proposed Sprint corridors of the A34 and A45 / Lode Lane. It is important that the relevant highway authority is fully supportive of any facilities or measures that require action by them, as the authority will have a legal obligation to provide the facilities or measures throughout the life of the scheme. At this stage there are no EP schemes proposed for Wolverhampton, but further schemes may be introduced at any time in the lifetime of the EP. Each of the constituent authorities will need to agree to the EP Plan to ensure it can be 'made', and EP Scheme where relevant to their area.
- 3.3 As the EP has sufficient operator support, subject to change, TfWM can proceed to formal (public) consultation. This is planned for a minimum six-week period from 11 May 2020.
- 3.4 TfWM will report the consultation outcomes and seek the approval of the WMCA Transport Delivery Committee to 'make' the EP Plan and the EP Scheme in July 2020; with the authority to negotiate and finalise the specific content of the agreements to formally 'make' the EP Plan and Scheme, delegated to the WMCA Head of Governance – this would be undertaken in parallel with constituent authorities.
- 3.5 The Council is requested to approve the EP Plan and delegate 'making' the EP Plan, subject to the statutory preparation, notice and consultation on the EP (the purpose of this report).
- 3.6 The EP Plan and EP Scheme would then be 'made' by each of the formal parties to the EP (WMCA and Local Authorities) in the Summer 2020. For the City Council, only the EP Plan requires approval.

### **4.0 Evaluation of alternative options**

- 4.1 An assessment was made by TfWM of legislation currently in use for other bus partnership schemes across the West Midlands, as well as new legislation from the Bus Services Act 2017 including the two new legislative options of Enhanced Partnership and Franchising. Following this assessment, it was recommended that the most suitable mechanism for delivering and managing Sprint ahead of the 2022 Commonwealth Games is through an EP.

4.2 There are several compelling reasons why an EP is the preferable mechanism to deliver Sprint including:

- The ability to implement an EP before the 2022 Commonwealth Games;
- The ability to manage access to infrastructure by Sprint and other services;
- The powers to set maximum frequencies or restrict access to only Sprint vehicles on individual route sections (which cannot be achieved with an Advanced Quality Partnership Scheme);
- The flexibility to trigger a review of the EP at certain points of the EP lifetime (whereas an AQPS has a minimum five-year lifespan);
- The ability to develop additional EP Schemes at a later date in the region if they are deemed an appropriate mechanism without having to create a new EP Plan;
- Supports the timescales for the operating model where commercial operators are required to procure the vehicles for use on the service; and
- Provides clear accountability for all partners including bus operators.

4.3 There is a “do nothing” option, but an EP will provide a collective framework for achieving shared strategic aims and engaging with bus operators, both for the deliverability of the first two Sprint schemes in readiness of the Commonwealth Games and Sprint standards to be achieved, as well as providing the opportunity to leverage further investment in the future to improve bus services, if additional EP Schemes are proposed or identified. An EP Plan which spans the Area of the WMCA is proposed, as it will allow future EP Schemes to be developed, if required.

## **5.0 Reasons for decision**

5.1 Delivering the A34 and A45 Sprint routes is a priority for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. There is an identified risk to the delivery of Sprint in time for the Commonwealth Games without adequate mechanisms to protect investment and create an operational model. TfWM recommend the creation of an Enhanced Partnership Plan for the area of the West Midlands Combined Authority, with a corridor-based Enhanced Partnership Scheme to help deliver Sprint in a timely manner, with scope for further EP Schemes in the future if there is an identified benefit to leverage further investment to improve bus services in the region and secure commitments to improvements for bus.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

6.1 There are no direct financial implications for City of Wolverhampton Council arising from the making of the Enhanced Partnership Plan itself, nor from the EP Scheme identified in relation to the Enhanced Partnership Plan to date. The EP plan development has been funded by TfWM and the EP schemes proposed are delivered in other local authority areas and therefore have no financial costs to Wolverhampton.

6.2 EP schemes may be proposed by the City of Wolverhampton, TfWM or local bus operators in the Wolverhampton area. Any future EP Schemes which impact Wolverhampton will be developed and any financial implications of such will be detailed as part of a further report to request any relevant approvals.

[HM/10022020/R]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

- 7.1 The EP represents a legal agreement encompassing the West Midlands Highway Authorities, the Combined Authority and bus operators to collaborate in the EP. The terms of the EP are such that any schemes proposed for the City of Wolverhampton Council area will be subject to authorisation by the normal procedures.  
[TS/07022020/R]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

- 8.1 The purpose of the EP is to facilitate improvements in bus service quality. This is by nature of benefit to all potential users irrespective of socio-economic grouping. There are no apparent negative equalities implications arising from the making of the Partnership.
- 8.2 Any individual schemes developed under the Enhanced Partnership will require dedicated equalities impact assessments which will be reported as required through the routine authorisation process.

## **9.0 Climate Change and Environmental implications**

- 9.1 This report has climate change and environmental implications in that the Enhanced Partnership includes the aim for the entire bus fleet in the West Midlands metropolitan area to meet at least Euro VI emissions standards by April 2021, cutting harmful pollution from buses by up to 95 per cent. Combined with an anticipated modal shift in travel choices from private car to public transport this is anticipated to have positive impacts on carbon emissions, air quality, and noise.

## **10.0 Health and Wellbeing Implications**

- 10.1 This report has implications for health and well-being in that the Enhanced Partnership has been identified as the best way to achieve modal shift in travel patterns towards bus travel in preference to private motor vehicle. This is anticipated to have positive impacts on air quality, noise, road safety and levels of physical activity.

## **11.0 Human resources implications**

- 11.1 There are no human resources implications for the Council arising from the making of the Enhanced Partnership.

## **12.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 12.1 There are no Corporate Landlord implications for the Council arising from the making of the Enhanced Partnership.

## **13.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 13.1 None

## **14.0 Appendices**

- 14.1 Appendix 1 - TfWM Briefing – Enhanced Partnership Plan and Schemes