

Joint Meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 31 October 2023 at 10.00 am

Council Chamber - Shire Hall, Gloucester



AGENDA

1	APOLOGIES To note any apologies for absence.	Chair
2	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Members of the Committee are invited to declare any pecuniary or personal interests relating to specific matters on the agenda. Please see note (a) at the end of the agenda.	Chair
3	GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC STRATEGY (Pages 1 - 6) To consider an update on the emerging Gloucestershire Economic Strategy.	Ben Watts
4	PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK REVIEW (Pages 7 - 24) To consider the attached report on the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP+) funding. Update reports on Mass Rapid Transport and Rail Services in Gloucestershire were recently considered at July's Gloucestershire Economic Growth meeting. Please use the following links to view these: Mass Rapid Transport: https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s93562/MRT_GEGSC_20July_v1.pdf Rail Services: https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/s93563/GEGSC%20Rail%20Update%2020-07-23%20SE.pdf	Tom Main

Minutes of the meeting:

<https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/documents/g11206/Printed%20minutes%20Thursday%2020-Jul-2023%2010.00%20Gloucestershire%20Economic%20Growth%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=1>

Membership –

Environment Scrutiny: *Cllr Roger Whyborn, Cllr Susan Williams, Cllr Gill Moseley, Cllr Alan Preest, Cllr Sajid Patel, Cllr Dr David Willingham, Cllr Vernon Smith, Cllr Chloe Turner (Chair), Cllr Emma Nelson (Vice-Chair), Cllr Brian Tipper and Cllr Wendy Thomas*

Economic Growth Scrutiny: *Cllr Robert Vines, Cllr Roger Whyborn, Cllr Matt Babbage (Chair), Cllr Paul Baker, (Vice-Chair), Cllr Vernon Smith, Cllr John Bloxsom and Cllr Chris McFarling Cllr Paul McCloskey, Cllr Lorraine Campbell, Cllr Matt Dimond-Brown, Cllr Angus Jenkinson, Cllr John Lane and Cllr Chloe Turner*

- (a) **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – Members requiring advice or clarification about whether to make a declaration of interest are invited to contact the Monitoring Officer, (Rob Ayliffe Tel:01452 328506/ e-mail: rob.ayliffe@gloucestershire.gov.uk) prior to the start of the meeting.
- (b) **INSPECTION OF PAPERS AND GENERAL QUERIES** - If you wish to inspect minutes or reports relating to any item on this agenda or have any other general queries about the meeting, please contact: Sophie Benfield, Senior Democratic Services Adviser ☎:01452 324094/ e-mail: sophie.benfield@gloucestershire.gov.uk
- (c) **GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS**
- 1 Members are required to sign the attendance list.
 - 2 Please note that substitution arrangements are in place for Scrutiny (see page 81 of the Constitution).
- (d) Please note that photography, filming and audio recording of Council meetings is permitted subject to the Local Government Access to Information provisions. Please contact Democratic Services (Tel 01452 324202) to make the necessary arrangements ahead of the meeting. If you are a member of the public and do not wish to be photographed or filmed please inform the Democratic Services Officer on duty at the meeting.

EVACUATION PROCEDURE - in the event of the fire alarms sounding during the meeting please leave as directed in a calm and orderly manner and go to the assembly point which is **outside the main entrance to Shire Hall in Westgate Street**. Please remain there and await further instructions.





REPORT TITLE: GLOUCESTERSHIRE ECONOMIC STRATEGY

Scrutiny meeting	Joint Meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee and Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee
Chair	Cllr Chloe Turner & Cllr Matt Babbage
Presenting Officer	Ben Watts – Team Manager Economy and Strategic Planning
Item Type	For information
Purpose of Report	<p>To provide an update on the emerging Gloucestershire Economic Strategy.</p> <p>This report is provided as an information item so members of the Environment and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committees can be informed of the progress to date regarding the production of the emerging new strategy, including a summary of the feedback received during the recent engagement process. The report will also outline the next steps in finalising the strategy ahead of seeking formal approval of the final strategy in early 2024.</p>
Recommendations/ Action sought	There are no recommendations sought from this report.
Forthcoming Decisions	<p>At this stage of the strategy production process there is no item on the Forward Plan covering the approval of the final strategy. This is expected to take place in early 2024. Once an appropriate date for approval is identified, the item will be added to the Forward Plan.</p> <p>On the 19 July 2023 Cabinet approved a seven-week public engagement on the Gloucestershire Economic Strategy.</p> <p>https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2076</p>
Background Documents	None
Appendices	None
Contact Information	<p>Ben Watts Team Manager Economy and Strategic Planning Ben.watts@gloucestershire.gov.uk 01452 426771</p>

1. Background

- 1.1 Gloucestershire needs a new county-wide economic strategy to address the existing gap in the county's thematic strategy suite. This gap results from the Government not formally approving the GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) in 2020.
- 1.2 Production of the LIS was halted by the COVID-19 Pandemic and, since then, by the changes in Government priorities regarding economic growth. The new Gloucestershire Economic Strategy will be a joint LEP / GCC strategy that builds on the priorities set out in the draft LIS and the 2018 Strategic Economic Plan.
- 1.3 It will provide a strategic overview of the county's economy and develop a set of county-wide priorities and delivery actions. It will provide a clear narrative through both a short-term lens, considering the priorities of the next 5-years, and a long-term perspective by including an updated 2050 vision for the county.
- 1.4 Once the strategy is completed it will include an action plan that will clearly articulate delivery priorities of the strategy and thereby enable a method to monitor progress of implementing it. The aim is to have the strategy substantially completed by December 2023 and seek formal adoption in early 2024.

2. Project Governance

- 2.1 A robust project governance structure has been implemented to oversee the production of the strategy.
- 2.2 This includes a project Task Group consisting of GCC officers, project consultants and two officers from the district authorities. This group is responsible for the production of the strategy. A Steering Group consisting of senior GCC officers with Senior Responsible Officer responsibility for overseeing the project delivery, the project lead officers from the Task Group and the Director of Strategic Growth from the GFirst LEP. This group is responsible for strategic oversight of the strategy production process.
- 2.3 In addition, throughout the life of the project there will be regular member briefing sessions, updates provided to the GFirst LEP Board, updates at the county Chief Executives group and monthly updates through the county-wide Economic Development Officers group.

3. Engagement

- 3.1 To inform the production of the strategy three distinct stages of stakeholder engagement were undertaken to raise awareness of the strategy production process with the aim to maximise stakeholder engagement and buy-in.
- 3.2 Stage 1 consisted of a series of stakeholder interviews and a comprehensive review of relevant policy documents. This took place between April and June

2023. Approximately 100 stakeholders were interviewed either on an individual basis or as part of a group discussion including officers from all district authorities. The views expressed during this stage of the process informed the emerging strategy themes of the strategy. This included Net zero carbon, Inclusive growth, Skills and employment, Supporting sustainable growth, Business support, Inward Investment and Digital.

- 3.3 Stage 2 consisted of a seven-week public engagement process. An engagement document was specifically created for this purpose with the aim of maximising accessibility and engagement. The document was available digitally from the County Council's website and printed copies could be provided upon request. Stakeholders wishing to provide their views were encouraged to do so using the County Council's online consultation tool.
- 3.4 The public engagement document presented a draft long-term vision for the county which focussed on creating improved employment opportunities within the context of achieving the county's climate change commitments as it transitions to a low carbon economy. It also presented the themes outlined within Stage 1 of the engagement process under two strategic headings 'Place and People'.
- 3.5 To ensure that there was a high-level of awareness of the engagement document, GCC and GFirst officers directly contacted various stakeholders identified during Stage 1 of the process and requested that they use their own stakeholder distribution lists to help publicise the engagement process. The County Council also used a variety of communications methods to target stakeholders including media releases, stakeholder newsletters, social media, and prominent web content.
- 3.6 Stage 3 consisted of five stakeholder workshop events which enabled more detailed discussions on the emerging themes, the expected strategy outcomes and proposed delivery priorities. The workshops were designed to focus on a specific sector of stakeholders. This approach was intended to highlight the importance of partnership working across public, private, and voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sectors to successfully deliver the strategy and sought commitments from each sector to help support the delivery of the strategy.

4. Summary of Feedback from Stages 2 and 3 Engagement Process

- 4.1 Stage 2 of the planned public engagement closed on Friday 15 September 2023. Feedback was provided by 119 individuals and organisations using the County Council's online consultation portal. Additional information has since been provided by several other organisations following the formal engagement period ending including the District Councils. This feedback is currently being reviewed and a summary report will be produced outlining the trend information captured through the process as part of the strategy production process.

4.2 Feedback received from the public engagement process was largely in support of the vision, focus and actions of the strategy. Those who provided written responses mainly commented on four areas:

- **Workforce, education, and training**, including support for businesses to employ students and provide more apprenticeships, to encourage people to remain in the county.
- **Climate change and environmental sustainability**, through supporting businesses to achieve net zero and be more environmentally responsible - including the opportunity to utilise the rural economy to deliver green energy, food security and safeguard biodiversity.
- **Inward investment and business development** to represent businesses post-LEP integration. Feedback highlighted the need for enhanced and ongoing general support for businesses, with the Growth Hubs providing business advisors, coaches, and mentors.
- **Infrastructure and public services** to provide reliable and affordable bus networks. Infrastructure developments could utilise more eco-friendly and locally sourced materials.

4.3 In terms of the high-level feedback received by groups: Businesses wanted more clarity over LEP integration and consideration of other employment sectors such as logistics, health and tourism. The public sector wanted more ambition within the document with greater use of data to provide a more robust narrative. They also wanted more information on the expected partnership approach within the strategy. The VCSE sector wanted closer links to health and wellbeing, stronger links to an inclusive economy, as well as more focus on the environment. Figure 1 provides a summary of the key information considered missing from the engagement document.

Figure 1 – High-level summary of feedback received through the Stage 2 public engagement process on the emerging Economic Strategy



- 4.4 The Stage 3 workshops were undertaken between the 27 September and 3 October 2023. Five events took place. Three were in person and two online. In total, over 100 people attended the events. The workshops reviewed the emerging county economic strategy with each audience (public, private and VCSE) encouraged to discuss their role in supporting its delivery.
- 4.5 Each of the three audiences suggested the strategy could be more ambitious and be 'more Gloucestershire'. The strategy presents the opportunity to define the county's USP and consider a county-wide approach to culture and placemaking, through collaborating with districts and partners. The feedback received through the workshops highlighted how this approach could attract inward investment and retain young people, talent and skills.
- 4.6 A priority throughout the workshops was collaboration and coordination between businesses, training/education providers, the public sector and VCSE to deliver the economic strategy. This includes the delivery of a county-wide skills and employment offer as well as business support.
- 4.7 Several attendees also suggested the strategy should include green issues, including net zero, to a greater extent throughout the themes. There were similar discussions around health and wellbeing, and cyber and digital.
- 4.8 There were also recurring discussions points within each of the emerging strategy themes:
- There was extensive discussion across all workshops around **sustainable growth**, advocating for an agreement across all local planning authorities, to futureproof the county through long-term planning. Attendees believed this would deliver greater affordable housing options. Discussions around this theme also highlighted the need for improving the access and availability of transport, particularly bus routes within the county, to alleviate pressures of rural living, social isolation, and access to services/employment.
 - Attendees argued that the strategy must outline the type of **inward investment** Gloucestershire wishes to attract. A sector-based approach to inward investment, whilst allowing all sectors the opportunity to engage with the offer, was also supported in the workshops.
 - **Skills and employment** focused on upskilling, reskilling, and promoting transferable skills to ensure the Gloucestershire workforce is resilient and agile, whilst supporting economically inactive people into work. There was also a focus on retaining skills and talent, especially of vocational skills and young people. This could be achieved through clear pathways from training into employment, locally relevant work experience and an effective careers advice service.
 - The **supporting business** theme considered the importance of a clear and comprehensive integrated LEP business support offer, which supports businesses throughout their life course. The integrated offer should also take an additional role of coordinating and signposting to wider support.

4.9 Analysis of the feedback received through Stages 2 and 3 of the process is still ongoing and will further inform the content of the emerging strategy.

5. Emerging strategy propositions

5.1 The engagement process has been very successful in helping to refine the key themes the Economic Strategy should focus on. Within the Stage 2 Public Engagement Document officers tried to create a narrative around two distinct areas 'Place and People'. This approach was not supported and will be removed from the final strategy. In addition, it is recognised that the commitments to achieving Carbon Net Zero targets must have a greater prominence throughout each of the strategy themes. As more clarity over the integration of the LEP into the County Council emerges, this will also be reflected in the final strategy.

5.2 At the time of writing this report it is proposed that the strategy is focussed on four key propositions intended to support the long-term vision for the county which focusses on creating improved employment opportunities within the context of achieving the county's climate change commitments. These include:

- **Sustainable Growth** which supports a strategic approach to planning and delivery of new housing and employment sites to ensure that new growth proposals are sufficient enough in scale to support carbon net-zero targets while ensuring that all supporting infrastructure is financially viable, so it is delivered in the right place and at the right time.
- **Inward Investment** which builds on supporting Gloucestershire's reputation as a welcoming and supportive environment for businesses from the UK and abroad to invest, fostering innovation, creating jobs and promoting prosperity across the county.
- **Skills and Employment** which seeks to ensure that every resident has the opportunity to grow their skills and make the most of job opportunities in a diverse and flourishing economy.
- **Business Support** which provides an offer to enable businesses of all sizes and types to innovate, create jobs, and positively contribute to the transition to a low carbon economy.

6. Next Steps

6.1 A first draft of the Economic Strategy will be shared with peers for review during November 2023 with the aim of producing a final draft by the end of December 2023. It will then be considered for approval by the LEP Board and the County Council early in 2024.

6.2 The Economic Strategy will consist of three components:

- An Executive Summary document of approximately 16 pages.
- A more detailed Strategy document which considers the four propositions in more detail and includes the strategy Action Plan.
- A comprehensive update of the county's Economic Evidence base.



REPORT TITLE: Public Transport Network Review

Scrutiny meeting	Joint Environment and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee 31 October 2023
Chair	Cllr Chloe Turner & Cllr Matt Babbage
Presenting Officer	Tom Main
Item Type	Overview
Purpose of Report	To update the Committee on Public Transport in Gloucestershire following the recent government grant (BSIP+)
Recommendations/ Action sought	Committee to note this update.
Forthcoming Decisions	N/A
Background Documents	Cabinet – 20 September 2023
Appendices	A. Cabinet report of 20 September 2023
Contact Information	Tom Main tom.main@gloucestershire.gov.uk 01452 425343

1. Background

- 1.1. Bus services across the UK have been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, subsequent inflation, and the combined effect of both on the viability of delivering bus services.
- 1.2. The pandemic and the various waves of lockdown had a massive and unavoidable impact on the number of passengers using public transport. At the height of the issue, the average passenger level had dropped by 95% when compared to the pre-pandemic peak.
- 1.3. As the country reopened passengers returned to public transport, however even today the average number of passengers are only 70-80% of their pre-pandemic level. This represents a very large drop in revenue for bus service operators. In addition to this, inflation has increased the cost of delivering bus services, with the cost of fuel and driver salaries rising significantly.
- 1.4. In early 2023, as Officers from the Integrated Transport Unit looked at the long term forecast for bus services in Gloucestershire, it became clear that the existing network could not be supported, particularly as government support funds were due to end in April 2023. The risk was raised that Gloucestershire County Council will have to review its subsidised public transport network with a view to making cuts to keep within the subsidy budget.
- 1.5. During 2023, various local authorities, including GCC, alerted the Department for Transport that there was a looming issue in the bus service network and without intervention, it would likely lead to the loss of a large number part of it. Commercial operators would cut back to ensure only their profitable services remained, and the council would not have available funds to replace them.
- 1.6. The Department for Transport subsequently announced a significant, long-term grant (called BSIP+) for numerous local authorities including GCC. The full detail of this grant, its impact, and the plan for the bus network is included in the Cabinet report that is included as Appendix A. However, to very briefly summarise, BSIP+ grant funding has secured the current bus network until 2025 and allows a significant investment into new and improved bus services throughout the county.

REPORT TITLE: Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP+) funding and update on Dynamic Purchasing System for Transport

Cabinet Date	20/09/2023
Cabinet Member	Cllr Philip Robinson, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, and Bus Transport.
Key Decision	Yes/No
Purpose of Report	To note the allocation of BSIP+ funding for the provision of improved bus services throughout Gloucestershire during 2023/4 and 2024/5; and to authorise Officers to procure these service improvements in line with this report.
Recommendations	<p>That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment & Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Procure contracts for the supply of the bus services set out In Appendix 1 from suppliers admitted to the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS), whose combined aggregate value shall not exceed £2.384m per annum for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years and 2. Procure contracts for the supply of the re-procurement of existing public bus services and home to school services set out in Appendix 2 from suppliers admitted to the DPS whose combined aggregate value shall not exceed £15.5m over their maximum contract length of 5 years.
Reasons for Recommendations	<p>Local bus usage has struggled to grow back to pre-covid levels, and the commercial bus market has shrunk as a consequence. This funding is intended to restimulate the market by funding improvements in the provision of public transport.</p> <p>Officers have suggested several specific bus services (Appendix 1) intended to boost bus usage, with the aim that these improvements could be sustained commercially after the end of the funding period.</p> <p>This funding also offers an opportunity to reinstate some bus services which were withdrawn by Operators at a time when they were meeting with difficulties in finding driving staff. There is also an opportunity to expand the operation of 'The Robin' demand-responsive service to additional rural areas of Gloucestershire.</p>

	<p>Appendix 2 covers a series of re-procurements required that sit outside of the proposal to use BSIP+ funding. These services can be considered ‘business as usual’ and are required to keep current services active as they approach the end of their current contract.</p>
Resource Implications	<p>The Department for Transport (DfT) has provided a grant of £2,209,623 in 2023/24 with a further £2,209,623 to come in 2024/25, with 50% of year 1 and 100% of year 2 funding subject to the Enhanced Partnership being in place. The terms for this grant require the funding to be spent within 12 months of receipt, with all funding to be spent by April 2025, and any underspend to be returned to the DfT.</p> <p>Part of this grant will be used to avoid a potential overspend, due to inflationary pressure and re-procurement costs, in the base public transport budget (forecast at £344k in 23/24, and £207k in 24/25), thus securing public transport services which might otherwise be lost through a network review process.</p> <p>The remaining £1,865m of year 1 BSIP+ funding will be used to procure the services proposed in Appendix 1. The budget is forecast to be sufficient to cover these recommendations.</p>
Background Documents	<p>List of proposed improvements to bus services in Gloucestershire using BSIP+ funding (Appendix 1) List of services for re-procurement (Appendix 2) Bus service improvement plans: local transport authority allocations - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Decision - Tender and Award of Transport Contracts under the Dynamic Purchasing System for Transport (gloucestershire.gov.uk)</p>
Statutory Authority	<p>Transport Act 2000 Bus Services Act 2017</p>
Divisional Councillor(s)	All
Officer	<p>Name: Tom Main Tel. no: 01453 425343 Email: tom.main@gloucestershire.gov.uk</p>
Timeline	<p>Procurement timeline for BSIP+ (Appendix 1) is approximate and will differ for some services due to other factors, e.g., purchased vehicle delivery time. 20/09/23: Cabinet. 27/09/23 - 28/09/23: Commence procurement of BSIP+ funded service enhancements. 17/11/23: Final date for receipt of bids. 20/11/23 - 24/11/23: Bid evaluation.</p>

	<p>27/11/23: Contracts awarded.</p> <p>01/01/24 onwards: New bus services commence.</p> <p>Procurement timeline for existing service re-procurement (Appendix 2) is from 01/10/23 – 31/03/25</p>
--	--

Background

1. There has been a reduced number of people using local bus services since April 2020, a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on movement and employment. Whilst there has been an increase in bus patronage levels in recent months, this recovery has not been even across the local network, with different rates of response in various parts of Gloucestershire, compounded by effects, by demography and the type of bus service.
2. A nationwide shortage of bus drivers was a contributing factor causing many Stagecoach bus services to be cancelled during 2022. This caused considerable uncertainty for bus users and has further reduced passenger numbers.
3. Because of declining bus patronage and financial viability, the national government launched its National Bus Strategy in 2020, which included a requirement for Local Transport Authorities to submit Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) documents in October 2021 with the aim of bidding for funding to make improvements to local bus services. Unfortunately, like most authorities, Gloucestershire's BSIP submission was not successful in gaining this funding.
4. Contract prices for supported local bus services increased significantly from 2021 onwards, as costs of operation rose. This was exacerbated by the national shortage of bus drivers. Both trends resulted in Stagecoach giving notice of withdrawal of certain routes and reductions in frequency on other routes. It was not possible to procure replacement bus services in all cases and the cost of some service replacement contracts was particularly high.
5. The reduction in the amount of travel by bus has caused financial difficulties for bus operators due to loss of fare income, whilst the cost to the council for tendered services has increased significantly. This problem has been exacerbated by recent significant inflation in the cost of fuel and drivers.
6. The Council's scope to reduce overall costs of bus service and home to school provision and minimise reductions in services is enhanced by being able to procure longer term contracts, typically of up to 5-7 years' duration. This provides operators with greater certainty over investment decisions, such as whether to purchase new vehicles. However, it does mean that total contract values are more likely to exceed £500,000. The Council can still terminate such contracts in line with the contractual notice terms (currently a period of 6 months).

7. To enable communities to access essential services the Council needs to be able to procure transport contracts with a total value in excess of £250,000. Restricting contract values by reducing contract lengths would not provide value for money, resulting in reduced accessibility to essential services and lower quality vehicles.
8. The specific bus service and home to school contracts referred to in paragraphs 6 and 7 of this report are set out in Appendix 2.

BSIP+ as an opportunity to increase bus patronage and restore bus service viability

9. Recognising the increasing possibility of bus service withdrawals and the slower recovery of patronage levels, which continues to put pressure on the commercial market, the County Council, alongside the County Councils' Network' has continued to lobby DfT for additional funding to support bus services in rural areas. It was therefore very much welcomed when the Government recently announced that supplementary funding (BSIP+) would be awarded to Local Authorities, with an instruction that this funding must be used as revenue support for local bus services. This could be in the form of support for improved bus services, new services, replacement services or for fares initiatives, all with the aim of stimulating additional bus patronage and securing the future viability of bus services.
10. This new funding offer presents a great opportunity for GCC to not only help secure the existing public transport network, but also to procure several highly desired new and expanded routes, giving the residents of Gloucestershire a much more comprehensive network. This approach aligns entirely with our aims to pump-prime and support services to help increase patronage with a view to more services becoming commercially viable over the medium to longer-term.
11. Without this intervention from the DfT, it was likely that an exercise to scale back the public transport network would have been needed, as inflationary pressures would have meant service reductions to maintain a balanced budget. However, this is no longer necessary.
12. The patronage level of bus services is influenced by the attractiveness of the service, for example the availability of a comprehensive number of journeys, or late and weekend services. Work patterns have evolved significantly in recent years, with a trend to more shift-working and fewer jobs available at 'traditional' 9 to 5 times. There was a clear call for later bus journeys and more weekend services in a 2021 public transport consultation. It is therefore recommended that a portion of this additional funding be allocated to the enhancement of evening and weekend services on several routes.
13. Bus operators will usually provide additional journeys on a commercial basis when they can see a short-term opportunity, as can be evidenced by Stagecoach's recent introduction of a more frequent all-night timetable on their Cheltenham-Gloucester route. The company has also recently registered later journeys on their busy 1 and 10 routes from Gloucester to Matson and Gloucester to Cheltenham. But in many cases, it is more realistic to consider a 'pump priming' approach to providing some additional journeys on routes which should become commercially sustainable in a couple of years.

14. Many Gloucestershire local bus services currently finish operation much earlier on Sunday evenings (around 1900) than on other days of the week, when buses run until 2300 or slightly later. But more journeys are now being made at weekends to reflect increased retail and social opportunities, and because of increased employment opportunities and expectations. It is therefore proposed that some bus services on Sundays should in future continue operation until later in the evening (around 2300).
15. There is an opportunity to increase frequency of bus operation on certain bus corridors. There is some scope to level-up service frequencies on some routes to a minimum of an hourly service in certain situations, especially if it's considered that this level of service can be sustained commercially beyond March 2025.
16. Some communities lost their bus service during late 2022. The recent BSIP+ funding settlement offer an opportunity to try and re-connect some of these communities.
17. The BSIP+ funding settlement also offers an opportunity to expand the geographic scope of the Robin Demand Responsive service, to expand this to at least three more rural areas of the County, including the Tewkesbury area, Stroud area, and the south Cotswolds.
18. These areas have the lowest level of conventional timetabled bus services which makes them suitable for expansion of the Robin demand-responsive transport service. This means we will have demand-responsive transport services in 100% of our rural districts.
19. Finally, BSIP+ support funding can be allocated to changing fare levels, promoting bus travel or even offering free travel, with the operators being compensated for lost revenue. Given the continued national £2 fare initiative, fare reduction or promotions such as free travel are not expected to be priorities at present. However, it is considered that provision of discounted or free bus travel at certain weekend periods may be an appropriate way of boosting bus travel at times in the future; for example it could support other Gloucestershire projects and priorities, such as supporting local retail centres in the period before Christmas. The opportunities for promotion and fare initiatives will continue to be considered by officers.

Process

20. Officers have proposed, following consultation with transport providers, a list of bus service improvements using the BSIP+ funding for Cabinet review (see Appendix 1) and approval. These services would then be procured through a series of contracts. The indicative timescale for this process is set out in the Timeline section at the beginning of this report.
21. Officers have also provided a list (Appendix 2) of existing public and home to school transport services that require re-procurement as they approach the end of their current contract. These can be considered as 'business as usual' with re-procurement required to maintain the operation of these services. These services are due for re-procurement between 1 October 2023 and 31 March 2025.

Options

22. BSIP+ (Appendix 1)
 - a. Accept the proposals put forward in Appendix 1 to invest the BSIP+ funding to enhance key services in the county, to replace some lost services, and to expand The Robin. This is the preferred option.
 - b. Decline the opportunity to use the funding. To return the funding to the DfT and to review the existing supported bus network due to the forecast overspend from April 2024.
23. Re-procurement (Appendix 2)
 - a. To approve the re-procurement of the public transport and home to school routes between 01/10/23 and 31/03/25. This is the preferred option.
 - b. To reject the re-procurement of these services allowing them to end with the current contract with no replacement.

Risks

24. There is a risk that operators do not have the necessary resources to provide the full list of BSIP+ improvements. However, we believe the market is in a better position than in 2022.
25. There is a risk that some of the proposed bus service enhancements might not be financially sustainable beyond the funding period ending in March 2025. Officers will mitigate this risk through discussion with Bus Operators, promotion of public transport, and a full review of services prior to March 2025.
26. Failure to utilise the BSIP+ funding correctly is likely to see some areas of the current bus network continue to decline. The BSIP+ funding is clearly designed to offer Local Authorities a means of reversing decline in bus patronage by stimulating demand through improved service provision.
27. The re-procurement of existing services results in larger contract costs. This has already been mitigated by the awarding of MTFS budget increases in 23/24.
28. BSIP+ funding following the initial £1.1m tranche is dependent on an Enhanced Partnership being agreed. Progress on this is good, Operators are supportive (including Stagecoach) and Officers expect it to be in place by the end of September 2023, however until it has launched this is still a minor risk.
29. All BSIP+ funding has to be spent in full by 31 March 2025, with any remaining funding paid back to the DfT. A delay in decision making reduces the time available to spend the funding and increases the likelihood that a repayment to the DfT will have to be made. A quicker commencement of these new and improved services means more passenger growth and therefore a higher

chance of commercial viability. This also directly reduces the risk that services will have to be withdrawn once the funding ends 2025.

Financial implications

30. The BSIP+ funding package from Central Government will permit the expansion of Gloucestershire's bus-based public transport network with no direct cost to the Council. The only anticipated GCC cost will be staff time to oversee procurement and to publicise these changes. The funding package will also avoid a predicted overspend in the Public Transport base budget for the 2023/4 and 2024/5 financial years. Other sources of income, such as developer section 106 funds, will be used where appropriate.
31. The DfT has provided a grant of £2,209,623 in 2023/24 with a further £2,209,623 to come in 2024/25. 50% of year 1 and 100% of year 2 funding is subject to the Enhanced Partnership being in place. The terms for this grant require the funding to be spent within 12 months of receipt, with all funding to be spent by April 2025, and any underspend to be returned to the DfT.
32. Work continues positively with operators on the development of the Enhanced Partnership (EP). Good progress agreeing the initial focus of the EP and the themes has been made and we are confident that an EP will be in place in Gloucestershire to meet the terms of the DfT funding.
33. Part of this grant will be used to fund the forecast inflationary overspend in the base public transport budget (forecast at £344k in 23/24, and £207k in 24/25), thus securing public transport services which might otherwise be lost through a network review process. The remaining £1,865m of year 1 BSIP+ funding will be used to procure the services proposed in Appendix 1.
34. The BSIP+ list (Appendix 1) has been developed in consultation with operators using an expected value of each improvement. Actual value will not be known until procurement can take place should Cabinet have approved the report. It is expected that the list can be funded using BSIP+ funding, if this isn't the case, upon procurement, then a revision to the list will be made, in consultation with the Executive Director of Economy, Environment & Infrastructure and the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport.
35. The budget is forecast to be sufficient to cover these recommendations. Any budget surplus following procurement of the agreed BSIP+ services could then be allocated to other services or bus initiatives. These will be prioritised with a focus on connections to market towns, expanded promotional events or incentives.
36. Our work with operators has seen improvements in the stability of the bus market. Training and supply of drivers has improved within the market and wider inflation and fuel issues are less volatile than previously. This in itself creates more stability and confidence to help support the investment.

Conversations between Officers and Transport Operators indicate that the necessary driver and vehicle resources exist within the market. The market is not under the same pressure as in 2022, and we are optimistic that the proposal in Appendix 1 is deliverable.

37. The re-procurement list (Appendix 2) is funded within current budgets. Inflation has been forecast and increases to both the public transport and home to school budgets are already approved through the MTFS process for 2023/24.

Objectives of the BSIP+ funding package

38. To provide stability in the County's bus network, by providing funding to cover projected overspend until April 2025.
39. To provide the financial basis of procuring improvements to some bus services, especially those which can be procured at relatively low cost, and which have the potential to be sustained commercially after the funding period.
40. To facilitate the expansion of the demand-responsive service known as 'The Robin',

Climate change implications

41. In line with the GCC Local Transport Plan, the BSIP+ funding and the re-procurement exercise, will promote the use of public transport encouraging a modal shift away from less sustainable methods of transportation.
42. Transport in private vehicles is an issue in rural areas, with a very high proportion of all trips made by car. Significant differences are evident between Gloucestershire's districts. For instance, the residents of Cotswold generate on average 50% more emissions through car travel per year than the residents of Cheltenham and Gloucester, reflecting the nationwide difference between transport patterns in urban and rural communities.
43. As a result, rural areas contribute a significant proportion of Gloucestershire's carbon emissions. BSIP+ offers the best opportunity in recent years to improve the public transport offer in rural areas, providing a genuine alternative to the car and contributing to the reduction in emissions across the entire county. The potential positive impact for decarbonisation in rural areas, has been a consideration alongside those elements are=ound need, rural accessibility, community priority for routes etc.

Ecological implications

44. Has an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) been produced, or will one be undertaken at a later stage? No

Equality implications

Has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed? Yes / No

45. An Equality Impact Assessment has been produced to accompany this Cabinet report.
46. The Council is acutely aware that some of the most vulnerable residents in the county rely on public transport to travel and access services. Increasing the extent and coverage of the County's bus network will have positive impact on the mobility of disabled and vulnerable people.
47. Public transport services are vital in providing access to health services, education, employment opportunities and social events for all those with protected characteristics. This report aims to expand the network of public transport in Gloucestershire, therefore increasing this access and further reducing barriers that those with protected characteristics face.
48. In addition the selected priorities and roll out of further Robin services take some positive steps to support rural accessibility and rural isolation issues across our communities.
49. Cabinet Members should read and consider the Equalities Impact Assessment to satisfy themselves as decision makers that due regard has been given.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

50. There is no current impact of this work with regards to Data Protection as no personal data has been used.

Social value implications

51. Many bus service operators who provide transport in Gloucestershire are Gloucestershire-based SME companies who put a significant amount of time and resource into the local economy by employing drivers, passenger assistants, office staff and managers. They also invest significantly in training and development of their staff. All drivers of larger vehicles will have to undertake and pass the professional CPC qualification. Many such operators also work with and contribute to local charities, and most of our Community Transport operators are charities. These organisations provide an exceptional service to their local area, areas that often lack regular transport services due to their extremely rural nature.
52. Transport services also contribute significantly to the economy by offering residents opportunities to move around the county for training, education, and employment. A healthy transport network is vital to a growing the local economy and to give people better opportunities to socialise. Many younger, older, and disabled residents do not have access to a car so the only way they

can travel to meet family and friends, access health appointments and take part in leisure activities is by using the public transport network.

Consultation feedback

53. The Council conducted an extensive public consultation in 2021/22 on attitudes to public transport provision in the County.
54. The Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan Survey closed on 03/02/22 and attracted 1,734 completed on-line forms. Around 95% of these responses were from local Gloucestershire residents – with the remainder mainly from Councillors or organisations. Responses appeared to be equally spread across all six of the County's constituent District Council areas. Around 50% of responses were from regular bus users (weekly or more frequently).
55. The survey asked what would encourage the respondents to use the bus more often. The most frequent answers were:
 - Additional buses in the morning and evening
 - Direct services
 - More reliable services (according to the published timetable)
56. The responses confirmed our expectations of the kind of enhancements the public would like to see. Over several years the less profitable aspects of bus services have been trimmed by Operators

Officer recommendations

57. To approve the allocation of BSIP+ funding proposal in Appendix 1 for the provision of improved bus services throughout Gloucestershire during 2023/4 and 2024/5 and to authorise Officers to procure these service improvements in line with this report.
58. To approve the re-procurement proposal in Appendix 2 for the replacement of existing public transport and home to school services.

Appendix 1

Following consultation with operators, this is a list of proposed new and enhanced bus services using the BSIP+ funding.

Appendix 1 - Potential BSIP+ bus service enhancements		
Service	Description	Operating days
32	Gloucester - Newent	M-Sa Evenings
62/63	Gloucester - Nailsworth/The Stanleys via Stroud	M-Sa Evenings
65	Gloucester - Stroud via Dursley	Daily
66	Cheltenham - Stroud	Daily
71	Gloucester to Northway via Tewkesbury	Daily
67	Bussage to Cashes Green via Stroud	Daily
1	Gloucester - Matson	Daily
2	Gloucester - Upton St Leonards	Daily
8	Kingsway - Coopers Edge via Gloucester	Daily
10	Cheltenham - Lower Tuffley via Gloucester	Daily
12	Gloucester - Quedgeley	Daily
41	Cheltenham - Northway via Tewkesbury	Daily
A	Coronation Square - Lynworth via Cheltenham	Daily
C	Cheltenham - Springbank	Daily
D	Bishops Cleeve - Hatherley via Cheltenham	Daily
24	Gloucester - Coleford via Mitcheldean	Daily
801	Cheltenham - Moreton-in-Marsh	Daily
S2	Cheltenham to Oxford via Northleach	Daily
72	Chepstow - Lydney - Cinderford - Micheldean	Mon-Sat daytime
New	Woodmancote - Cheltenham via Sapphire Rd, Hyde Ln	Mon-Sat daytime
F	Town Centre - Coronation Square	Daily daytime
Robin	Forest of Dean enhancement	Mon-Sat daytime
Robin	Tewkesbury area expansion	Mon-Sat daytime
Robin	South Cotswolds expansion	Mon-Sat daytime
Robin	South of Stroud expansion	Mon-Sat daytime

Notes on proposed Bus Service Improvements

Route 32**Gloucester – Newent**

Current service: Monday to Friday, broadly hourly, with additional evening peak journeys, last bus 1940
Saturdays – hourly service, last bus 1940
Sundays – bus every 2 hours, last bus 1850.

Proposal: Three or four later buses each way, Mondays to Saturdays.

**Routes 62, 63
Stanleys)****Gloucester to Stroud (extending to Nailsworth/The**

Current service: Mondays to Fridays, two buses per hour until 1735, then last bus at 1940
Saturdays, two buses per hour until 1735, then at 1935
Sundays, hourly until 1700

Proposal: Two later departures each way, Mondays to Saturdays.

Route 65**Gloucester to Stonehouse, Dursley and Stroud**

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays, broadly hourly, last bus 1835
Sundays, four journeys from Gloucester to Dursley, last bus 1650

Proposal: Two later journeys each way, Mondays to Saturdays
Sunday/Public Holiday journeys extended from Dursley to Stroud.

Service 66**Cheltenham to Stroud**

Current service: Mondays to Fridays, broadly hourly, last bus 1745
Saturdays, hourly, last bus 1730
Sundays, no service

Proposal: Introduction of Sunday/Public Holiday service.

Service 67**Bussage to Cashes Green via Stroud,**

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays, half-hourly to Cashes Green, hourly to Bussage.
Last bus 1845
Sundays, no service

Proposal: Friday and Saturday evenings, three later journeys to both Bussage and Cashes Green
Sunday/Public Holiday service to be introduced.

Service 71 **Gloucester to Tewkesbury and Ashchurch station**

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays, half-hourly, last bus 1853
Sundays, no service

Proposal: Mondays to Saturdays, three later journeys each way
Sunday/Public Holiday service introduced.

Service 1 **Gloucester to Matson**

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays, daytime every 12 minutes, evenings
every 30 minutes, last bus 2350
Sundays, daytimes every 20 minutes, last bus 2025

Proposal: Two later journeys each way, Friday and Saturday evenings.
Sunday/Public Holiday service to continue until at least 2300.

Service 2 **Gloucester to Upton St Leonards**

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays, daytimes three times per hour, evenings
hourly each way, last bus 2255
Sundays, one bus each hour each way, last bus 1755

Proposal: Two later journeys each way Friday and Saturday evenings.
Sunday/Public Holiday service to continue until at least 2300.

Service 8 **Kingsway to Coopers Edge via Gloucester**

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays, daytimes three buses per hour, each
way, hourly evenings, last bus 2255
Sundays, two buses per hour, last bus 1855

Proposal: Two later journeys each way on Friday and Saturday evening.
Sunday/Public Holiday service to continue until at least 2300.

Service 10 **Cheltenham to Lower Tuffley via Gloucester**

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays, daytimes 4 buses per hour each way,
twice per hour evenings, last bus 2323
Sundays, three buses per hour, evenings hourly, last bus 2303

Proposal: Two late journeys each way, Friday and Saturday evening.

Service 12 **Gloucester to Quedgeley**

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays, daytimes 4 buses per hour each way, 2
times per hour evenings, last bus 2310
Sundays, daytimes three buses per hour, last bus 1845

Proposal: Two late journeys each way, Friday and Saturday evenings

Sunday/Public Holiday service to continue until at least 2300.

Service 41	Cheltenham to Tewkesbury and Ashchurch Station
Current service:	Mondays to Saturdays, daytimes two buses per hour each way, hourly evenings, last bus 2330 Sundays, daytime hourly each way, last bus 1950
Proposal:	Two late journeys each way, Friday and Saturday evenings Sunday/Public Holiday service to continue until at least 2300.

Service A	Coronation Square to Lynworth via Cheltenham
Current service:	Monday to Saturdays, daytimes 4 buses per hour each way, evenings 3 buses per hour, last bus 2350 Sundays, daytimes three buses per hour, last bus 1848
Proposal:	Two late journeys each way, Friday and Saturday evenings Sunday/Public Holiday service to continue until at least 2300.

Service C	Cheltenham to Springbank
Current service:	Monday to Saturdays, daytimes 4 buses per hour each way, evenings 3 buses per hour, last bus 2315 Sundays, daytimes two buses per hour, last bus 1900.
Proposal:	Two late journeys each way, Friday and Saturday evenings Sunday/Public Holiday service to continue until at least 2300.

Service D	Bishops Cleeve to Hatherley via Cheltenham
Current service:	Monday to Saturdays, daytimes 3 buses per hour each way, evenings 2 buses per hour, last bus 2322 Sundays, daytimes three buses per hour, last bus 1852
Proposal:	Two late journeys each way, Friday and Saturday evenings Sunday/Public Holiday service to continue until at least 2300.

Service 24	Gloucester to Coleford via Mitcheldean and Cinderford
Current service:	Monday to Saturdays, daytimes broadly every 2 hours, some additional afternoon buses Last bus 2135 (Fridays and Saturdays 2310) Sundays, daytimes every 2 hours, last bus 1740 (runs to Coleford only)
Gloucester	
Proposal:	Sunday/Public Holiday service extended to Coleford.

Service 801	Cheltenham to Moreton in Marsh via Bourton in the Water
--------------------	--

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays, daytimes every 90 minutes, hourly at peak times. Last bus 1815
Sundays, two round trips (summer only) Last bus 1700

Proposal: Mondays to Saturdays, hourly daytime service, cost
Sundays/Public Holiday, two-hourly service.

Service S2 Cheltenham to Oxford via Northleach and Witney

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays every two hours, last buses 1715 (to Oxford) 1920 (to Witney)
Sundays, two journeys to Oxford, one journey to Witney. Last bus 1415 (Oxford) 1800 (Witney)

Proposal: Mondays to Saturdays, increase to hourly frequency
Sundays/Public Holiday, increase to two-hourly frequency.

Service 72 Chepstow to Lydney

Current service: Mondays to Saturdays every two hours, last bus 1812

Proposal: Extend this service from Lydney to Mitcheldean via Soudley, Ruspidge and Cinderford
Would replace the Lydney-Cinderford link recently discontinued.

New service Woodmancote to Cheltenham via Bishops Cleeve, Hyde Lane and Kingsditch

Proposal: New service operating two times per hour, providing new links to employment, also replacing Woodmancote service recently discontinued.

Service F Cheltenham to Coronation Square via St Marks

Proposal: New Monday to Friday daytime service replacing the discontinued St Marks section of route F.

Robin Forest of Dean area
additional resource proposed to meet peak demand.

South Cotswold area
New geographic area to be served.

South of Stroud area
New geographic area to be served.

This page is intentionally left blank