

**CARDIFF'S BUS STRATEGY**

**STRATEGIC PLANNING AND TRANSPORT (COUNCILLOR CARO WILD)**

**AGENDA ITEM: 12**

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**Reason for this Report**

1. To approve undertaking public consultation and engagement to develop a Bus Strategy for Cardiff.

**Background**

2. In January 2020, Cardiff approved the ambitious Transport White Paper that set out the 10 year transport vision for the city. In this document it identified a number of key actions one of which included developing a bus strategy. Since then the Welsh Government has established a Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) through Transport for Wales (TfW) in partnership with Local Authorities and Bus Operators to support the bus industry in response to the COVID19 pandemic. It also provides an opportunity to reform the bus network and identify the interventions necessary to support the delivery of the Transport White Paper, One Planet Cardiff, Local Development Plan, Local Transport Plan and the Capital Ambition Recovery and Renewal.
3. The preparation of the Bus Strategy will be informed by public consultation and engagement with key stakeholders. It will set out what is needed in Cardiff to ensure excellent bus services that will address the needs of both current and potential passengers in Cardiff. It will develop high level and strategic options for enhanced bus based public transport in Cardiff, which will inform a package of transport measures and initiatives described as 'Big Moves'. These strategic actions will collectively enable Bus working in a way that is integrated with Metro to become an effective mass public transit system for Cardiff.
4. The public consultation and engagement will be based on gathering feedback on the 'Big Moves' and the issues identified in the Equality Impact Assessment.

**Current Challenges**

5. Bus passenger numbers in Cardiff, as elsewhere in Wales and UK generally (outside London) have been falling for many years. The

deregulated system in place since 1986 has led to uncoordinated services and fares, making bus travel an unnecessarily complicated business for both existing and prospective users. There has been additional congestion and car ownership has increased in Cardiff by 13,000 vehicles in the last decade (10% increase). Over this period bus ridership has declined by 20% in Wales but has remained relatively static in Cardiff primarily due to population growth.

6. In addition, bus travel has been severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Public transport passenger numbers plummeted to approximately 10% in April 2020, whilst social distancing and additional cleansing requirements have placed added burdens and costs on operators. As the lock-down restrictions have been lifted, there has been a significant increase in bus patronage currently returning to approximately 60% of pre-COVID19 levels. Furthermore, bus service frequency has returned to 100% of pre Covid levels. However, social distancing restrictions limit the passenger carrying capacity of the network and there are times of the day in some locations where passengers are unable to get onto buses because the services are effectively overcrowded resulting from the COVID19 restrictions.
7. The Welsh Government (WG) and local authorities (LAs) have stepped in to support the sector with substantial financial assistance. This assistance known as the Bus Emergency Scheme (BES) has been vital in ensuring the survival of bus operators throughout Wales.
8. In the longer term, through the recovery period, however, there are questions about how and when successful levels of ridership will return. There are risks that habits learnt throughout the Covid period of greater private car use will persist. Also, there are significant threats from increased usage of Uber style or Maas vehicles. These allow systems of smaller vehicles digitally organised to compete with public transit. In some European cities these have resulted in a significant detrimental impact on bus viability.

### **Bus Network Vision**

9. The Transport White Paper sets a clear target to double the numbers travelling by bus from 2018 to 2030. It is estimated that 10% of commuters in Cardiff travel by bus which needs to double. It is important to underline that this approach accepts that this increase will only occur on the basis of significant service transformation. Failing this, in the medium term, the survival of public transport may come under threat from an increasingly competitive commercial environment. These changes will only be achieved by making sure buses in Cardiff are fundamentally more reliable, convenient, cost effective, greener and high quality, taking us to the destinations we want when we want, supported by easy-to access travel information which is accurate and simple to understand.
10. The bus network needs to be part of an inclusive transport system that seeks to address the urban challenges of social inequality in Cardiff and

is an integral part of the regional network. The Transport White Paper sets out a low carbon transport proposition that includes:

- An integrated South Wales metro public transport network;
- A cross city, value for money, prioritized bus and P+R network, including short, medium and long-distance services;
- A South Wales wide public transport ticketing system with a proposed £1 fare for a single local bus journey within the City area;
- Proactive promotion of integration with active travel solutions; and
- Close management of residual private vehicle traffic with the potential for a charging/traffic demand management process.

11. Importantly, buses help reduce congestion by taking cars off our roads.
12. One Planet Cardiff sets a target for 100% low emission taxis and buses by 2027.
13. The Bus Strategy will take an ambitious approach:
  - Put bus at the heart of Cardiff's Transport, Economic and Environmental policies;
  - Bus to be mode of choice – the key mass transit option;
  - Give buses more priority over general traffic;
  - Cheaper capped fares;
  - Higher service frequencies on key corridors, linking with local services (possibly demand responsive transport) for areas of lower demand;
  - More comprehensive school bus network to reduce school run congestion;
  - Low Emission / zero carbon bus network; and
  - Use of bus as a social equity tool for 'levelling up' enabling the most disadvantaged areas e.g. 'southern arc' to prosper.

## **Issues**

### **Bus Emergency Scheme**

14. It is widely recognised that the bus industry cannot continue in its present form even if passenger numbers should return to pre-COVID 19 levels relatively quickly. Preparation of the Bus Strategy will examine ways in which Cardiff's bus network can be improved, and to drive forward actions outlined in the Council's Transport White Paper of January 2019. It will also inform the Council's programme of funding bids and the BES Bus Network Reform proposals in partnership with the Welsh Government, TfW, Local Authorities in the Cardiff City Region and Bus Operators. Bids will be subject to WelTAG appraisal and prioritisation.
15. As a response to these threats BES provides the opportunity to reform the bus network and provide integrated services that provides a 'Gold Standard' alternative to travelling by private car and provides for the travel needs of local communities and the Cardiff City Region.
16. Working groups have been established by the Welsh Government through Transport for Wales in the Cardiff City Region to facilitate

discussion with Local Authorities and Bus Operators and the identification of improvements to the bus network include bus services travelling regionally to and from Cardiff. The work will inform the future actions for reforming the bus network and achieving the objectives of BES and the Wales Transport Strategy.

### **Bus Strategy Technical Report**

17. The Bus Strategy is not a statutory requirement, but rather a supporting document for the policies and plans of the Transport White Paper, One Planet Cardiff, Local Development Plan, Local Transport Plan and the Capital Ambition Recovery and Renewal.
18. The Bus Strategy Technical Report in Appendix A provides the basis to inform the process of consultation in the development and preparation of a Bus Strategy for Cardiff. It includes analysis of demographics, demand and service frequency to identify gaps in provision and bus service planning principles for consideration. The key findings are as follows:
  - The decline in bus journeys across Wales pre- Covid19 mirrors trends seen elsewhere in the UK where bus passenger miles have reduced concurrently with the reduction in passenger numbers resulting in a vicious cycle of lower levels of service that further reduces the attractiveness of bus services.
  - 60% of bus users are in the two lower income quintiles making the provision of a socially equitable bus network a key challenge.
  - Car ownership continues to rise whilst there are significant areas of the city where the population is reliant on public transport.
  - Corridors with high service frequencies support 10% or higher mode share travelling to work by bus.
  - There are service planning opportunities that can be identified by analysis of population density by age and consideration of journey purpose and density of activities.
  - Growth in Cardiff will necessitate increasing the number of buses that operate on the network by 40 to 80 per hour in the next 20 years if the mode share remains at approximately 10% but will need to be significantly more with the target of 20%.
  - The majority of bus services operate between 07:00 and 19:00 with up to 200 buses per hour operating during the peak times of the weekday.
  - The vast majority of bus services travel to and from the City Centre limiting the ability of users to make journeys to a wider range of destinations without being significantly inconvenienced interchanging.
  - Emerging research suggests that 20% of public transport demand may 'disappear' long-term following the COVID19 Pandemic.

### **Bus Strategy Big Moves**

19. As a result of the initial assessment of all the information, the Council has identified a number of strategic actions or "Big Moves", that it is proposed to enable the fundamental transformation of bus services that is urgently

required. These have also been informed by the Bus Strategy Technical Report in Appendix A.

20. Although the Council has direct or indirect control over a number of these actions, the agreement and support of key partners such as Welsh Government, TfW, and the bus operators themselves will be essential to effective delivery.
21. The list of strategic actions are:
  - **Big Move 1: Complete the Bus Interchange**
  - **Big Move 2: Create New Priority Bus ‘Smart’ Corridors**
  - **Big Move 3: City Centre Package**
  - **Big Move 4: Metro Integration, Integrated Ticketing and Information Package**
  - **Big Move 5: Fares**
  - **Big Move 6: Review of Bus Network Governance arrangements for the medium and long term**
  - **Big Move 7: Creating a Better Customer Experience**
  - **Big Move 8: A Low Emission/Zero Carbon Bus Fleet**
  - **Big Move 9: Integration of Schools Transport**

#### **Big Move 1: Complete the Bus Interchange and existing Capital programme**

22. The Council has already been highly proactive in delivering the infrastructural support for service transformation. There are already a number of important capital works in progress. Of crucial importance is the completion of Cardiff Central Interchange. It will be a catalyst for developing an integrated network connecting the Cardiff City Region. In addition, Waungron Interchange, Parkway Station Interchange, Junction 33 Park and Ride, UHW Interchange will provide a framework to make the network function effectively and efficiently making public transport an attractive alternative to travelling by private car.

#### **Big Move 2: Create New Priority ‘Smart’ Bus Corridors**

23. Evidence shows that a number of strategic corridors are critical to bus movement across the city. These corridors link the key bus user communities in and outside Cardiff to the city centre, and key destinations. Bus priority improvements – including more targeted segregation - and technological improvements to managing traffic signals on key major routes will establish a network of ‘Smart Corridors’ giving bus travel an advantage over the private car.

#### **Big Move 3: City Centre Package**

24. The current emergency allocation of road space in the City Centre in response to Covid19 will need review as Covid restrictions ease. It will also include an assessment of city centre bus routes and stop capacities whilst ensuring the measures identified give operators flexibility of routes around the City Centre.

#### **Big Move 4: Metro Integration, Integrated Ticketing and Information Package**

25. The development of Metro supported by bus service integration provides an opportunity to drive integration between modes and an appropriate level of informed interchange. Informed interchange will include the provision where routes intersect of specific interchange locations – ‘urban hubs’ to facilitate transfer between routes and modes of public transport e.g. Waungron Bus Interchange and the adjacent Metro Station. Active Travel measures such as bike stands, lockers, better walking routes to stations/interchanges will also be integrated.

#### **Big Move 5: Fares**

26. This will include an analysis of fare levels and the measures, including £1 flat fare, off-peak reductions, demographic specific offers, price capping & transfer tickets. Price-point and simplicity are critical to encourage more bus patronage and significantly reduce dwell time at bus stops.

#### **Big Move 6: Review of Bus Network Governance arrangements for the medium and long term**

27. The eventual exit from BES will require bus service governance reform and funding of the bus network in order to deliver the 20% mode share target. Options and opportunities for long term integration of networks including franchising, partnerships Statutory or Voluntary, or other options that may arise from Welsh Government legislation that will need to be evaluated.

#### **Big Move 7: Creating a Better Customer Experience**

28. The bus network needs to offer a high quality, comfortable, digitally connected offer to encourage a social and cultural shift to people choosing to travel by bus. Achieving this will require organisational coordination of marketing and better more identifiable branding.

#### **Big Move 8: A Low Emission/Zero Carbon Bus Fleet**

29. Bus use is a low carbon transport choice. This will be enhanced with a low or zero emission fleet. A programme to deploy low emission and zero carbon buses at a faster rate than is currently happening is therefore necessary as is investment in the essential depot technology.

#### **Big Move 9: Integration of Schools Transport**

30. Making bus travel for all pupils cheaper and easier will help to embed the cultural change needed to support bus travel long-term. Encouraging this will complement the implementation of School Act Travel Plans that seek to maximise the numbers of pupils walking or cycling to school. It is also important to continue supporting Independent Travel Training for pupils with Special Needs to facilitate their ability to use the bus network.

#### **Opportunities for Delivery**

31. The delivery of the ‘Big Moves’ will involve seeking opportunities through the following mechanisms and drivers:
- Capital Funding: WG Grant, City Deal, s106, LA capital match funding

- Revenue Funding: BES 2, WG Network Review, s106, Charging/Traffic Demand Management, LA revenue supported services funding
- Service Quality Improvements through BES2
- Integration of fares/tickets/operators/modes and Information
- Cheaper Fares
- South East Wales Transport Commission Recommendations

### **Proposed Public Engagement**

32. The public consultation will present the 'Big Moves' through a published consultation pack inviting written responses in August/September 2021 including an online feedback form. It will also invite views on matters identified in the Equality Impact Assessment. The consultation will seek to engage with hard to reach groups to get representative feedback. The results of the consultation will be reported to Cabinet in October/November 2021 and will be used as a draft framework for preparing the Bus Strategy.
33. Engagement with transport related key stakeholders will include the Welsh Government, TfW, Local Authorities in the Cardiff City Region, Passenger Transport User Groups and Bus Operators.

### **Local Member consultation**

34. Local Members, Stakeholders and members of the public will be consulted on bus issues to inform preparation of a Bus Strategy. The financial implications of any proposals arising from the consultation will need to be considered before they are implemented.
35. Specific scheme consultation with Local Members will be undertaken at the appropriate time early in their development and subject to funding.

### **Scrutiny Consideration**

36. The Environmental Scrutiny Committee considered this issue on 6 July 2021. Any comments received will be circulated at the Cabinet meeting.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

37. To prepare a Bus Strategy informed by public consultation and engagement with key stakeholders.

### **Financial Implications**

38. The costs of undertaking the consultation will be funded from existing resources. Future reports on the implementation of the Bus Strategy will need to include more detailed information on the costs of introducing the Big Move programmes and how these programmes will be funded.

## Legal Implications

39. The report recommends undertaking public consultation and engagement to develop a Bus Strategy. It should be noted that consultation gives rise to the legitimate expectation that the outcome of the consultation will be duly considered when subsequent decisions are made.
40. In developing the strategy and implementing the same:
- (i) detailed legal advice should be taken on each of the proposals and their achievability given any legal constraints.
  - (ii) the Council needs to be mindful, as the owner (sole shareholder) of a municipal bus company, of its duties under the Transport Act 1985 and the need to ensure there is no distortion of competition/ any opportunities are open to all operators providing bus/transport services.
  - (iii) where third party funding is to be relied upon to implement the strategy, that the conditions attached to such funding can be met

The report refers to appendix A, *Bus Strategy Technical Report, June 2021* produced by Sterling Transport Consultancy Limited. It is noted that Legal Services has not been involved in the preparation of this document.

41. In considering the recommendations contained within the report and in developing the strategy and various projects/ policies, regard should be given, amongst other matters, to the following general legal requirements:

## Equality Requirements

42. The Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010. Pursuant to these legal duties Councils must, in making decisions, have due regard to the need to (1) eliminate unlawful discrimination, (2) advance equality of opportunity and (3) foster good relations on the basis of protected characteristics. Protected characteristics are: (a) Age, (b) Gender reassignment, (c) Sex (d) Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality, (e) Disability, (f) Pregnancy and maternity, (g) Marriage and civil partnership, (h) Sexual orientation (i) Religion or belief – including lack of belief.
43. Before determining the strategy, consideration should be given to the requirements to carry out an Equality Impact Assessments ('EIA') so that the decision maker may understand the potential impacts of the proposals in terms of equality. This will assist the decision maker to ensure that it is making proportionate and rational decisions having due regard to the public sector equality duty.

## Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

44. The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ('the Act') places a 'well-being duty' on public bodies aimed at achieving 7 national well-being goals for Wales - a Wales that is prosperous, resilient, healthier,

more equal, has cohesive communities, a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, and is globally responsible.

45. In discharging its duties under the Act, the Council has set and published well being objectives designed to maximise its contribution to achieving the national well being goals. The well being objectives are set out in Cardiff's Corporate Plan 2021-24. When exercising its functions, the Council is required to take all reasonable steps to meet its well being objectives. This means that the decision makers should consider how the proposed decision will contribute towards meeting the well being objectives and must be satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken to meet those objectives.
46. The well being duty also requires the Council to act in accordance with a 'sustainable development principle'. This principle requires the Council to act in a way which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Put simply, this means that Council decision makers must take account of the impact of their decisions on people living their lives in Wales in the future. In doing so, the Council must:
  - Look to the long term
  - Focus on prevention by understanding the root causes of problems
  - Deliver an integrated approach to achieving the 7 national well-being goals
  - Work in collaboration with others to find shared sustainable solutions
  - Involve people from all sections of the community in the decisions which affect them
47. The decision maker must be satisfied that the proposed decision accords with the principles above; and due regard must be given to the Statutory Guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers, which is accessible using the link below:<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/statutory-guidance/?lang=en>

### General

48. The decision maker should be satisfied that the decision is in accordance within the financial and budgetary policy.
49. The decision maker should also have regard to, when making its decision, to the Council's wider obligations under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language Standards.

### HR Implications

50. There are no HR implications arising from this report

### Property Implications

51. There are no property implications arising from this report

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to

1. Approve the undertaking public consultation and engagement to develop a Bus Strategy for Cardiff.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Planning, Transport and Environment, subject to consultation with the Cabinet Member Strategic Planning and Transport, Cabinet Member Finance, Modernisation & Performance, s.151 Officer and Director Governance and Legal Services to determine and approve the final form and content of the public consultation and engagement on Cardiff Council's behalf and to deal with all ancillary matters relating thereto in preparing the Bus Strategy.
3. note that there will be a further report on the draft Bus Strategy for approval.

<b>SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	Andrew Gregory Director of Planning, Transport & Environment
	9 July 2021

*The following appendix is attached:*

*Appendix A: Bus Strategy Technical Report, June 2021*

*The following background papers have been taken into account*

*Transport White Paper- January 2019*

*Report to Cabinet 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 Bus Emergency Scheme*

*Report to Cabinet 20<sup>th</sup> May 2021, Capital Ambition: Recovery and Renewal  
Equality Impact Assessment – Bus Strategy*