

An annual progress report will be produced and published on the anniversary of the adoption of the Enhanced Partnership Plan (30th September each year).

Executive Summary

The Wokingham Borough Council Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan and Scheme were made on 29th September 2023. The EP Scheme started 70 days after.

This report summarises the progress made in working together under the EP, upcoming milestones, risks and issues and any actions to be considered by the Forum.

It should be noted that the progress reported in this paper does not represent all work being done by all partners to improve bus services. Partners will continue to carry out their normal functions, with actions recorded through their own governance and reporting structures.

Background and Context

An EP is a legal partnership agreement between an LTA and local bus operators operating in the borough. It is aimed at helping to deliver the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The EP sets minimum standards for local bus services, provides a framework for specifying how grant funding or any other funding will be spent, provides a governance framework for partnership working and partnership decision making, as well as a legal mechanism for its variation. Any decisions made by the partnership would then be subject to the Council's statutory processes, legal duties and Constitution.

Both the EP Plan and the EP Scheme cover the full administrative boundary of Wokingham Borough. Wokingham Borough Council has worked closely with neighbouring authorities to ensure a consistent approach to the Enhanced Partnership for cross-boundary travel. The Council has worked closely with Reading Borough Council in particular, given the significant daily movements between Wokingham and Reading Boroughs.

EP Meetings

Since the creation of the EP, two Forum meetings have taken place. These occurred on the 5th February 2024, and an Interim Forum on the 14th May 2024. Within the Interim Forum, the revised 2024 BSIP (see below) was discussed with stakeholders including bus operators, neighbouring authorities, and the University of Reading.

Actions were recorded and acted upon. There is only one action still in progress from the meeting on 5th February – the setting up of a 'community led group' has required careful consideration in terms of how it relates to other, existing structures for community engagement with the Council as mentioned in more detail below.

No requests for further meetings were received from Forum Members and no proposals for consideration were received which were not presented by WBC, but this is not unexpected given that the EP is in its first year.

As envisaged by the creation of the EP, engagement and collaboration with bus operators both within the Forum and individually has been successful, receiving ideas for the BSIP and feedback on the draft BSIP documents, as well as data to enable completion of the related Bus Connectivity Assessment required by the Department for Transport.

EP Composition

During the year, Arriva has stopped operating within the Authority boundary and Carousel (Go Ahead) has taken over the route, increasing the mileage.

Some services within Wokingham have seen changes. Reading Buses services have had some changes in frequencies to reflect changing demand and in some cases replacement services on contracted routes. The Leopard 3 and Tiger 7 have been combined into the 600 and the Leopard 8 combined with the Leopard 3 to simplify the network. Reading Buses have increased the frequency of the 21 and Leopard 3 to every 15 minutes from every 20 minutes, with other minor changes also made around the network.

As a result of these changes, the mileage percentage between operators will be recalculated, as this determines voting rights.

EP Scheme

Progress towards delivery of the Measures and Facilities in the EP Scheme has been documented in the 2024 BSIP Update which DfT required each LTA to prepare. The draft was submitted to DfT on 12th June 2024, with formal adoption by Wokingham Borough Council in July 2024.

The 2024 BSIP Update also contains updates to the current offer to bus passengers and targets, the EP Scheme will now be varied to include these updates by means of the Bespoke Arrangements for Varying the Enhanced Partnership Scheme as set out in section 5.4 of the EP Plan.

Bus Service Registrations

The Office of the Traffic Commissioner continues to manage the registration process for local bus services in Wokingham Borough. As the increased vehicle standards required by the EP do not take effect until 29th July 2025, Wokingham Borough Council has not received any reports of non-compliance from the Traffic Commissioner or any queries from operators in respect of service registrations since the EP Scheme took effect.

Challenges and Risk Management

Since the partners and stakeholders already work closely together, there is a risk that the formal EP (Enhanced Partnership) may not be seen clearly as effective. This is especially the case given the challenge of keeping up momentum in delivering the EP Scheme with limited resources (funding and staff). As a result, the effectiveness of the EP will be closely monitored.

BSIP Targets

The primary goal of the Enhanced Partnership (EP) is to implement the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). A summary of progress against the BSIP 2 targets, which were the most up to date targets at the time of the EP being made, is provided here for ease of reference. Updated targets with a comprehensive overview, including detailed updates on milestones, challenges, and future plans, are provided in the 2024 BSIP Update available on the WBC website.

Target 1: Number of Passengers

	2019/20	2022/23	2024/25 (target)	Progress
T1: Annual Number of Passengers in millions	2.80	2.20 (post covid effects)	3.08	Passenger numbers have continued to increase since the pandemic.

Target 2: Bus Vehicle Kms

	2019/20	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 (target)	Progress
T2: Annual Bus Vehicle Kms (in millions)	1.85	1.13	1.15	1.94 (target)	The 2024 BSIP has been submitted, with allocated funds from DfT further progress can be made towards achieving this target.

Target 3: Bus journey times, reliability and punctuality along key transport corridors

	2019/20	2023/24	2024/25 (target)	Progress
T3A: Average daily (weekday) journey time on 5 key corridors	75.3 mins	Unknown	72 mins	The 2024 BSIP has been submitted, with allocated funds from DfT further progress can be made towards achieving this target.
T3B: Bus punctuality / Reliability	74.94%	Unknown	80%	
T3C: Passenger perceived punctuality and journey time	84%	56%	88%	

Target 4: Fares and Ticketing

	2019/20	2023/24	2024/25 (target)	Progress
T4A: Reading Buses and Thames Valley Buses – Passenger view on fares and ticketing	65%	60%	68%	The DfT £2 fare cap is considered to have impacted on the passenger views of fares and ticketing set by operators.

Target 5: Bus Vehicle Types

T5A: Bus Type	Number of buses 2022/23	% of total 2022/23 %	Number of buses 2023/24	% of total % (target)	Progress
Euro 5	3	7	2	0	The 2024 BSIP has been submitted, with allocated funds from DfT further progress can be made towards achieving this target.
Euro 6	33	73	21	70	
Bio-methane	9	20		20	
E-bus	0	0		10	
Total	45	100		100	

Target 6: Park & Ride Ticket Sale

	2019/20	2024/25 (target)	Progress
T6A: Annual usage of Park & Ride sites	145,369	152,800	The 2024 BSIP has been submitted, with allocated funds from DfT further progress can be made towards achieving this target.

Target 7: Passenger Satisfaction

Measure	2019/20	2024/25 (targets)	Progress
T7A: NHT Local Bus Satisfaction	67%	70%	The 2024 BSIP has been submitted, with allocated funds from DfT further progress can be made towards achieving this target.
T7B: NHT Public Transport Information	53%	58%	
T7C: Reading Buses – Transport Focus Satisfaction	92%	95%	
T7D: Thames Valley Buses – Transport Focus Satisfaction	94%	95%	

Target 8: Rural Accessibility Bus Vehicle Kms

	2022/23	2024/25 (target)	Progress
T8: Annual Bus Vehicle Kms in Rural Areas	119,197	143,037	The 2024 BSIP has been submitted, with allocated funds from DfT further progress can be made towards achieving this target.

Target 9: Targets for Safety

Measure	2019/20	2022/23	2024/25	Progress
T9A: Personal Safety on Bus	72%	69%	76%	The 2024 BSIP has been submitted, with allocated funds from DfT further progress can be made towards achieving this target.
T9B: Personal Safety at Bus Stop	64%	66%	67%	

Future Plans and Recommendations

A programme of future EP Forums has been developed, with meetings planned for October 2024 and March 2025.

We will be working on establishing the community groups to ensure inclusive engagement and effective collection of feedback and opinions from both bus users and non-users.