

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 18th October 2021

SUBJECT: Bus Service Improvement Plan

CHIEF OFFICER: Executive Director of Place

CONTACT OFFICER: Savio DeCruz (AD Place Operations)

WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO: Sustainable Transport and the Environment

KEY DECISION: YES

EXEMPT: NO

DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL IN: YES

APPENDICES:

- A. Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP – version 4, draft)
- B. BSIP – Outline Funding Template
- C. Equality Impact Assessment

1 Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out the general principles and core elements of the proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (“BSIP”), including a summary of the main elements within the plan, along with the proposal to refine the document subject to further research and analysis, and subsequently to submit the BSIP to the Department for Transport (DfT) by the DfT deadline of 31st October 2021.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Consider and approve the draft BSIP.
2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director - Place and Communities, in consultation with the Lead Member for Sustainable Transport and the Environment, to:
 - (a) approve the final version of the BSIP and submit this to the DfT,
 - (b) subject to approval of the BSIP, commence preparation of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme (EPP).
3. Note that a report will be presented to Cabinet for approval of the EPP.

Reason:

The submission of the BSIP is an essential next step in the Council's response to the National Bus Strategy. This response also includes the development of an Enhanced Partnership with Bus Operators in Slough. The overall requirement is to establish and commit to a joint plan to improve reliability and quality of services, increase bus passenger levels and improve bus passenger satisfaction. The timescale allowed by the government for Local Transport Authorities to develop this Enhanced Partnership and BSIP has been extremely tight, hence the draft status currently accorded to the BSIP document presented here for review. This draft BSIP follows the establishment of the Enhanced Partnership in June 2021 (more details are included in section 2.3). Assuming the general principles of the BSIP are approved by Cabinet, the plan will be finalised, including reference to any data analysis not yet completed, and any other necessary content, including further reference to financial implications, costs and potential opportunities. Subsequently, there will be an opportunity for the Cabinet member with responsibility for Sustainable Transport and the Environment to review the final draft and request any amendments prior to submission.

Assuming Cabinet approval of the BSIP, and following subsequent DfT review of the BSIP, the next stage will be the development of the Enhanced Partnership Plan. This will be a much more detailed plan containing proposals for specific schemes within the overall EPP. However, in line with the principles of the BSIP, all proposals within the EPP will again be subject to feasibility, availability of funding, and consultation responses. Hence, the EPP will be presented to Cabinet for approval before progressing any schemes.

2 Report

2.1 Approval of the BSIP in principle will allow the Transport team to prepare submission of the final plan to the DfT. The BSIP document presented with this report is in draft form, and work is continuing on the plan prior to submission. This will include responding to any comments raised in this Cabinet meeting, along with all further analysis and conclusions. As presented, the structure and main contents of the BSIP are as follows:

- Review of the current bus services '*offer*' in Slough
- The headline targets for improvement, specifying journey time, journey reliability, passenger numbers and passenger satisfaction as the main features to be addressed.
- Proposed measures and how they can be delivered, including (but not limited to) bus priority, service frequency, fares, ticketing, modal integration and so forth.
- A proposed reporting mechanism.
- Reference to DfT guidance throughout.

The following general principals apply to the BSIP:

- The DfT has instructed local authorities and bus operators to be ambitious in their plans.
- All the measures proposed in this plan are subject to feasibility and availability of funding, and also to satisfactory consultation outcomes.
- The proposals also depend upon thorough cooperation between the Council as Local Transport Authority and the bus operators in Slough.

- The BSIP is the first phase of the overall plan. Subsequently, as the second phase, an Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP) will be prepared, again in partnership with the bus operators, for submission to the DfT. This will include more detailed, scheme specific content for the purpose of requesting funding.

As proposed, the BSIP does not include any immediate financial commitments. However, given the requirements of the government and the DfT, it is necessary to have a BSIP in place, along with an Enhanced Partnership with the bus operators, in order to support the improvement of services and infrastructure. In the absence of a satisfactory BSIP, a range of negative financial implications for the Council would be expected to arise.

The Department for Transport has allocated a fund to support Local Transport Authorities in response to the National Bus Strategy. The value of this total fund is £3 billion over the lifetime covered by the strategy, currently expected to be the next three years. This fund includes grants for local authorities to develop their responses. Further, this fund will also cover the DfT's costs of running a newly established Centre of Excellence for all National Bus Strategy related matters. This same fund will be used for the ZEBRA initiative (Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas), and also for contributions in response to successful bids for specific schemes proposed by Local Authorities as part of their Enhanced Partnership Plans. Given the administrative costs referred to above, it is not clear how much will be available in due course for scheme contributions. However, currently, the only way to have the opportunity to formally seek any such funding is to have an Enhanced Partnership in place.

Section 6 in the BSIP provides a table of all proposed measures, which are all designed to have positive impacts on the four key government targets:

- Improved journey times
- Improved journey time reliability
- Increased Bus patronage
- Increased Passenger Satisfaction

This table of measures links to and is supported by a summarised outline funding template. This is provided as Appendix B. The prioritisation for each summarised package of measures is yet to be determined. The total estimated cost for all measures is approximately £54m. It is stressed, however, that all such proposals are subject to funding, feasibility and consultation.

The DfT has said that it will welcome bids to other funds / sources, e.g. Levelling Up, to contribute to the success of the EP. We are expecting guidance from DfT as to how the funding will be broken down. SBC officers will negotiate agreements with bus operators that are conditional on the level of funding that can be secured.

2.2 The BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership have been designed to align with all Transport and wider Council policies. They will support all outcomes of the Five Year Plan, 2020-2025, noting, specifically:

Outcome 2: *Our people will be healthier and manage their own care needs*

The schemes that will be delivered through the Enhanced Partnership Plan will be designed to reduce congestion and improve safety at key locations, also to improve air quality, and will therefore lead to better public health across the borough.

Outcome 3: *Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and stay.*

Enhanced provision of public transport will improve social inclusion by making Slough more accessible and increasing mobility across the borough. This will provide better access to commercial / retail centres as well as access to jobs and education. Increased patronage of public transport will also contribute to the reduction in CO² and improved air quality.

Outcome 4: *Our residents will live in good quality homes*

The BSIP will focus on services and infrastructure which will provide high quality transportation links for both existing and new areas of housing development.

Outcome 5: *Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide opportunities for our residents*

Better connectivity through improved services and links will contribute to economic growth. Greater priority for public transport and increased modal shift will reduce congestion and make journey times more reliable on the road network.

The priorities to be addressed in the establishment of the Enhanced Partnership will also be in line with the overarching Council policies, notably the **Carbon Strategy**. The Council has committed to challenging targets, with a net zero carbon target by 2040 for the borough, and a stretch target of 2030 for the Council's own organisation operations. Increased public transport will make a significant contribution to meeting these targets.

In Transport terms, specifically, and the links with Planning, the Council's Transport policy is focused on providing a sustainable, integrated travel solution at local level. At the heart of this is the need for modal shift, with public transport and mass movement of people playing an essential role here. Multi-modal and linked journeys involving public transport and active travel especially, are also crucial. The BSIP will also support the following specific related policies:

- The Strategic Transport Infrastructure Plan (STIP)
- The Network Management Plan
- The Local Transport Plan.
- The Low Emission Strategy.
- The Slough Local Plan and Spatial Strategy.

Full details relating to these policies are set out in the Significant Decision for the BSIP.

2.3. Options considered

The DfT initially presented LTAs with a choice of models to implement the requirements of the National Bus Strategy, and hence to base the BSIP on. Three options were available:

Enhanced Partnership

An Enhanced Partnership (EP). This entails close working, cooperation and commitment to a formal, shared and legally enforceable plan for the delivery of bus services in and across the local authority area. This plan is the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

This is the option that the Council has selected, and has to date received funding from the DfT to the value of £150,000.

The Enhanced Partnership has been established, with the first formal meeting with the bus operators having taken place on 25th June 2021. Terms of reference have been agreed, with unanimous approval from the group on the principles relating to the development of the BSIP. The ongoing objectives were discussed and agreed again with the bus operators on the 4th August 2021. At the same meeting, the main proposals included in the BSIP were presented to and agreed by the bus operators.

Franchising

A franchising arrangement would involve the local traffic authority being in overall control of bus services provided in the borough, including the determination and award of franchises to be awarded to specific companies for specific routes / services, subject to successful bidding processes. This option was not feasible. As per the DfT guidance, as a non-mayoral authority, SBC would have required Secretary of State approval for this option, and this would only have been considered if we had previously fully explored the Enhanced Partnership option. In practice, it would not have been possible for Slough to have a franchising system in place by April 2022, and in this circumstance the DfT would have required Slough to have in place an Enhanced Partnership by April 2022 even if it were to consider franchising in the medium to long term.

Neither of the above

In all practical terms, this was not realistically an option. It is unclear how Slough could fulfil its duties regarding the delivery of public transport, and compliance with all related policies and commitments in this scenario. There would also have been greater uncertainty about possible funding sources for transport projects across the board.

The requirement is now to submit the final version of the BSIP to the DfT by the end of October 2021. No exceptions are being allowed by the DfT for late submission. Should the BSIP not be submitted on time, it is unknown exactly what the implications would be for the Council, but there is a possibility that any initial allocation of funding, and any future funding opportunities would be either lost or delayed.

2.4. Background

The National Bus Strategy has been developed by Government in the context of the need to bring about a post-COVID-19 recovery across the country, and to ensure the recovery is not car-led. This follows on from the publication of the DfT's *Better Deal for Bus Users* guidance, with a commitment to help local authorities improve current services and restore lost services where they're needed most.

During the COVID-19 restrictions, demand for public transport was substantially reduced and emergency government funding was applied to maintain bus services. All formal restrictions were lifted in July 2021. In transport terms, the essential policy is for public transport to be an integral part of the overall recovery. For buses, the Government has put forward the slogan '*Bus Back Better*', indicating the intention to ensure that services post-COVID will be an improvement on the situation before the restrictions first came into place.

However, even before the COVID-19 restrictions came into place, policies were in place at Slough to promote increased uptake of public transport and specifically travel by bus. Hence the National Bus Strategy is building on existing plans and aspirations in Slough.

The mass movement of people on the network has long been a priority in order to deliver an integrated, sustainable transport solution in and across the borough. This has underpinned transport and wider policies.

Prior to consideration by Cabinet, the BSIP has been scheduled for review at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on September 28th.

Prior to that, Cllr Anderson, member with responsibility for Sustainable Transport and the Environment, was consulted on the Significant Decision in July 2021 to proceed with the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership.

Leading on from the Significant Decision, as an essential requirement of the EP and BSIP, the Council's Transport officers have engaged in discussions with all bus operators who run registered, local bus services in Slough. A formal terms of reference document was established for this purpose. Most recently, SBC presented the latest version of the draft BSIP template to the operators at a group partnership meeting.

SBC Transport officers have also consulted neighbouring local authorities, mainly Buckinghamshire County Council and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead as well as Heathrow Airport Limited. There is a shared commitment here to ongoing engagement, and to ensuring a consistent approach to routes and services that cross boundaries or where there are other shared opportunities and obligations.

Regarding the public, in order to better understand public opinion and to be better informed about public transport needs, opportunities and problems, the Council's Transport Service is currently engaging in an online consultation with the general public. Responses have been requested via an online survey on the Citizenspace website, with the survey running until 26th September 2021. This is intended to involve both bus travellers and those who do not currently travel by bus. Information will be collated and may result in additional or amended content in the final draft of the BSIP. However at this stage, this is expected to strengthen the existing evidence base, and the overall principles and proposals within the current draft BSIP presented at this meeting are not expected to change significantly.

Place Scrutiny review:

The BSIP was presented for review at the Place Scrutiny meeting on 28th September 2021. The panel was asked to note and comment on the content of the BSIP. A range of comments was received, notably relating to:

- Fare prices and ticketing options
- Carbon reduction, policies and zero emission buses. Data provision

- Provision of services – operator obligations and SBC influence
- Supported services and subsidies
- The effectiveness of highway improvements and bus priority
- More focus on services in Langley
- Insufficient reference to the bus station, including accessibility measures
- Insufficient reference to consultation with local groups including disability forums
- Reference to lack of facilities on board buses for wheelchairs
- No evidence of consultation with ward members
- Demand responsive services not proposed
- Request for increased services to Heathrow and Wexham Park
- Likely reduction in parking income due to increased public transport usage

In response, the above comments and questions have been covered to varying extents within the BSIP draft document. In particular, the table of proposed measures already includes detailed reference to fares and ticketing and partnership obligations. Measures relating to the bus station have not been included to date, since the intention is to address the issues now, as an existing priority and as far as practically possible, and not to make them subject to plans in the BSIP.

The requirement for greater local engagement is acknowledged. An extensive survey has been conducted online, but provision for ongoing and more extensive liaison with community groups will be considered for inclusion in the BSIP.

There will be consultation with ward councillors and more widely at the next stage, when it comes to proposing specific scheme proposals and bids at the Enhanced Partnership Plan stage.

The requirement for zero emission buses and carbon reduction more widely will be further reviewed, and proposals included in the BSIP included or strengthened.

All other points will also be further reviewed and considered for reference (or enhanced reference) in the BSIP, as appropriate.

Operator Comments:

The draft BSIP has also been shared with the operators of registered local services in Slough. The main comments received to date are as follows:

First Bus Group has asked for:

- More information on multi-operator ticketing proposals
- More detailed reference to zero emission buses, including ambition level and timescales

Reading Buses have asked for or referred to the need for:

- Provision of real time data on relevant websites
- Better facilities on board for all bus travellers
- Improvements to bus shelters and bus stops generally
- Reference to park and ride plans for Slough

Most of these requests for proposals will ultimately require commitment and investment from the operators themselves, within the overall partnership. All responses are currently being considered and amendments to the final BSIP are being prepared where appropriate.

As an overall comment in response to consultation, the BSIP is intended to be a high level document and set of proposals, with greater detailed to be provided at the EPP stage. Furthermore, once published, the BSIP will be a live document which will be regularly reviewed, and additional or amended proposals will be applied as and when required and in agreement within the Enhanced Partnership.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1 Financial implications

3.1.1. From 2022, Local Authorities with BSIPs / EPPs in place will be invited to submit bids for EP / BSIP related schemes, for funding contributions from the overall £3bn pool.

3.1.2. An underlying principle applicable to all schemes and improvements proposed in the BSIP is that they are subject to availability of funding and that they are feasible in all relevant ways. Currently there is no funding available from the Council. There may be some consideration of the use of possible future Section 106 contributions as partial funding towards schemes, but this is not currently being proposed. Furthermore, the Council is currently seeking ways to reduce expenditure in any way legally and practically possible, including, for example, supported bus services.

3.1.3. Bus operators will be expected to be equally committed to the BSIP (they will be joint owners of and legally bound to all commitments in the plan). This, in theory, would suggest financial investment and contribution. However, in addition to the need for all scheme delivery to be subject to available funding and feasibility, commercial interest will also be an inevitable factor affecting the likelihood of any such constraints.

3.1.4. Regarding services to Heathrow Airport, there is a possibility that funding opportunities may arise in the future, potentially to be provided by Heathrow Airport Limited, for improved services across the relevant authority areas. Noting the current economic circumstances and the impacts of COVID-19, no such funding sources have currently been made available.

3.1.5. Overall, subject to the successful establishment of the partnership, and ongoing effective provision of bus services and relations with the bus operators, no negative financial impacts are anticipated.

However, should the Council choose not to submit a satisfactory BSIP, this would immediately raise financial problems for the Council. This would include the cessation of COVID-19 related payments, which would reduce support for bus services and would therefore be detrimental to both the Council and the operators, who would then be obliged to provide funding for necessary measures from alternative sources.

A grant of £100K already has been received by SBC from the DfT from the Bus Capacity Grant. This was in response to the Council's provisional indication that it has committed to an Enhanced Partnership arrangement and BSIP submission. A subsequent £50k has been received to further assist in the development of the BSIP. The funding covers the following:

- Preparation of the formal statement committing to an Enhanced Partnership
- Development of the BSIP, including preparatory work with the bus operators
- Development of the subsequent specific scheme bids in the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP).

All of this expenditure is subject to satisfactory business cases being approved by the Expenditure Control Panel.

Consideration is already being given to the suspension of subsidies by the Council to support a number of services that are not commercially viable. The lack of a satisfactory BSIP would virtually guarantee that there is no scope to engage with the operators to try to maintain these services on any basis.

It would also prevent the ability to bid for DfT funding for schemes in the lifetime of the National Bus Strategy, placing both the Council and bus operators at a disadvantage compared to other authorities where partnerships or franchises are in place.

3.1.6. The budget for the Council's contribution to the Enhanced Partnership will be managed by the Transport team in the Strategy and Infrastructure division of the Place directorate.

3.2 Legal implications

3.2.1. The Council as a Local Transport Authority (LTA) has statutory functions under the Local Transport Act 2008 and has statutory duty to comply with the Transport Act 2000, as amended by the Bus Services Act 2017. This 2017 Act introduces an Enhanced Partnership, which is an 'agreement between a local transport authority (LTA) and local bus operators to improve local bus services'

3.2.2 The Council is also under a statutory duty to comply with the National Bus Strategy. Statutory guidance was issued by the DfT in May 2021: National Bus Strategy: Bus Service Improvements Plans which sets out the timeline for compliance with various stages.

3.2.3 Step 1 is for the Council to decide which statutory path to follow – pursue an Enhanced Partnership or develop a bus franchising assessment. As stated in the Strategy, by the end of June 2021, to be eligible for new funding and continued access to COVID-19 Bus Services Support Grant (CBSSG) every LTA must have published a statutory notice that they intend to prepare an EPP (as required by S.138F(1)(a) of the Transport Act 2000).

As stated in section 2.3, the Council has chosen to develop an Enhanced Partnership. Formal notice of this decision was given in May 2021. The partnership has been in place since June 2021.

3.2.4 Step 2 LTA's should develop and publish a BSIP by 31 October 2021. Each plan will need to be updated annually and reflected in the authority's Local Transport Plan and in other relevant local plans.

The Transport team will manage this annual review and the alignment of the BSIP with all Council related Transport policies.

3.2.5 Step 3 from April 2022, the BSIP should be delivered using one of the two statutory options under Step 1 above. Thus, the Council must have an Enhanced Partnership in place by April 2022.

The Enhanced Partnership commenced in June 2021.

3.2.6 Although the BSIP is a joint plan, with all parties accountable for the successful delivery of the BSIP, the Council has ultimate responsibility for submitting the plan to the DfT in the first instance, and thereafter to chairing the partnership.

3.2.8 The BSIP is an essential element of the way the Council will fulfil its statutory duty to identify the bus services appropriate to meet the needs of their areas, and to secure provision of those services that cannot be provided on a commercial basis. However, the BSIP will inevitably provide new opportunities as well as challenges regarding the best way to fulfil this duty, with an emphasis on the Enhanced Partnership arrangements.

3.2.9 The commitments proposed in the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership will have implications for both the Council as Local Transport Authority and the Bus Operators, who will be the joint owners of the BSIP. However, all schemes included in the BSIP are proposals at this stage, and are subject to feasibility, funding availability and consultation.

3.2.10 In accordance with the Council's Constitution, under Part 3.5, the Cabinet has responsibility for executive functions relating to Transport matters (including Traffic Regulation Orders and related management matters). This function relating to Operational Transport and Traffic matters can be delegated to Officers in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation. Under Part 3.7 of the Constitution, the Lead Member for Sustainable Transport & The Environment has the responsibility for Public Transport & Travel Plans and relationships with Bus & Rail Operators and Heathrow Airport Ltd.

3.2.11 Part 3.6 of the Constitution sets out the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and under Section 2 - Executive Directors' general delegated powers include: taking and implementing any decision required for operational effectiveness, taking any action necessary to ensure the effective development and implementation of the Council's key strategies and services relating to directorates and attending and representing the Council on partnership boards. Under section 4, specific delegation is given to the Executive Director – Place for the function relating to Transport planning.

3.3 Risk management implications

3.3.1. A risk assessment has not been conducted specifically to accompany the preparation and submission of the BSIP to the DfT. However, when it comes to progressing proposed schemes, the risk assessments, notably including financial risks, will be considered and prepared as appropriate.

3.3.2. In broad terms, there is no financial risk associated with the preparation and submission of the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership. Conversely, there would be a significant risk should the Council decide not to proceed with its BSIP commitments already made. This relates to the comments in the Finance section above.

3.3.3. Similarly, there are no policy related risks associated with the preparation and submission of the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership. Given the options made available by Government to local transport authorities, the BSIP and EP route is considered the best way to deliver on policy commitments already made by the Council. Conversely, again, there would be a significant risk of failing to meet targets and commitments should the Council not continue with the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership.

3.4 Environmental implications

3.4.1 The overall impacts of the BSIP are expected to be highly positive in terms of contributing to the environmental implications. These are referred to in the policy related comments in section 2.

The promotion of Public Transport is one of the major elements of sustainable travel. This involves the mass movement of people across the network, reducing the need for journeys made by cars or other limited capacity vehicles. This in turn leads to reduced congestion and hence better air quality as well as reduced carbon emissions and particulates across the borough. Highway related schemes (e.g. bus priority and junction improvements) will also reduce congestion and therefore lead to reduced emissions.

3.4.2. Still greater contributions will be made to the Carbon Strategy by the potential for zero emission buses to be delivered through BSIP schemes. The DfT has recently called for bids for funding to develop ZEBRA schemes (Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas). Whilst a ZEBRA scheme is not currently included in the BSIP, this may well be included as the partnership develops. Initial consultation with the major bus operators in Slough has already taken place on this subject, with encouraging responses.

3.5 Equality implications

3.5.1 The Equality Act 2010 outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty and under s.149 it requires Public Bodies as decision makers to have 'due regard' to achieving a number of equality goals, which includes the need to:

- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- c. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

3.5.2 Relevant protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

3.5.3 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design policies and the delivery of services.

3.5.4 In order to assist in meeting its duty the Council has carried out an initial Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) for the BSIP and this is provided as Appendix C to this report. This is an over-arching assessment at this stage of the overall response to the National Bus Strategy. Subsequently, when it comes to developing plans for specific schemes within the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP), individual EIAs will additionally be provided for all schemes of a scale and scope considered appropriate to warrant this level of assessment.

The overall expectations are as follows:

- a) The impacts of the BSIP will be positive for all groups in society, with wide-ranging opportunities and improvements across the borough, and
- b) There will be no negative impacts from the BSIP on any protected group

Examples of the benefits that will be of particular benefit to identified groups include the following:

- c) More frequent services will be especially helpful to the elderly. This will lead to increased perceptions of safety and greater comfort / minimised physical pain related to traditionally longer waiting times. A more reliable network of services will also improve connectivity and social inclusion, as well as access to a range of destinations.
- d) Similar benefits will also be expected for people with disabilities, through a greater understanding of the issues, which will be shared by the operators and the Council. Where not already included, the proposed table of measures and schemes will be reviewed and strengthened to better address the needs of people with disabilities
- e) More frequent and more reliable services will also improve safety (perceived and actual) especially for mothers of young children. Benefits will also be associated with better access to healthcare related destinations. Lower fare costs may well be of particular benefit here too.
- f) Improved bus services are expected to provide a more attractive, more efficient travel option for specific cultural groups, where there is typically a strong 'car culture' and a reluctance to travel on public transport.
- g) More reliable bus services, reduced waiting times, and a better bus network are all likely to provide a safer and more attractive travel option to those seeking to travel to places of worship across the borough.

3.6 Procurement implications

3.6.1 There is no immediate need for Procurement knowledge or expertise, or any actions related to this discipline in the finalisation of the BSIP (the plan) and the Enhanced Partnership. However, again, when it comes to advancing the plans for specific major schemes, or contractual opportunities relating to services and facilities, all appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that procurement legislation will be adhered to, and all guidance followed.

3.7 Workforce implications

3.7.1 There is a clear need for the Council to have at its disposal the relevant knowledge, experience, and skills within its workforce. As part of the overall Public Transport related responsibilities of the Council, the BSIP will be managed by the Place directorate, Strategy and Infrastructure division. The BSIP is considered to be one of the Transport service's top priorities. Arrangements are currently in place to manage the initial stages of the introduction of the BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership. Additional staff may be required to cover the full range of BSIP and Enhanced Partnership responsibilities as the plan is delivered. Regular reviews will be required on an ongoing basis to ensure that all aspects continue to be covered.

Furthermore, the success of the plan will also depend on appropriate levels of staffing resources in related service areas, including procurement, legal and financial disciplines, particularly when it comes to progressing scheme development and contractual matters within the Enhanced Partnership.

3.8 Property implications

3.8.1 Reference is made throughout the BSIP to bus related infrastructure including the bus station and transport interchanges, as well as bus stop and signage. However, there is currently no reference to the management of the Slough bus station in the town centre. This may be subject to proposals and arrangements as the BSIP plan is taken forward. As in all partnership matters, this will involve consultation and close working with the bus operators who use or have the option to use the station.

4. Background Papers

- BSIP - Slough Baseline: Technical Note
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Significant Decision: Place – Strategy and Infrastructure: Response to the National Bus Strategy. Dated 12th July 2021.
- DfT: Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy
- DfT: NBS – BSIP Guidelines