

Equality Impact Assessment

| | |
|---|---|
| Directorate: Place | |
| Service: Strategy and Infrastructure – Transport | |
| Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Eddie Hewitt | |
| Date of Assessment: 14th September 2021 | |
| Name of service/function or policy being assessed: Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) | |
| 1. | <p>What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?</p> <p>The BSIP is an essential element of 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.</p> <p>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 <i>Better Deal for Bus Users</i> guidance, with a commitment to help local authorities improve current services and restore lost services where they’re needed most.</p> <p>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 ‘<i>Bus Back Better</i>’, indicating the intention to ensure that services post-COVID will be an improvement on the situation before the restrictions came 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.</p> <p>The headline objectives in the BSIP include targets as follows:</p> |

- Reductions in journey times
- Improvement in journey time reliability
- Increased patronage (passenger numbers)
- Increased levels of passenger satisfaction.

The proposals in the BSIP designed to realise these objectives include (but are not limited to):

- Increased bus priority on the road network
- Better service frequency
- Lower fares
- Better ticketing systems and arrangements (including multi-operator ticketing)
- Improved modal integration opportunities
- Better service information

The BSIP is the first stage in the overall response to the National Bus Strategy, and is by its nature a preliminary plan which is subject to various factors and circumstances coming into alignment. Hence, this Equality Impact Assessment is an initial, overarching review.

The BSIP has also not yet been finalised. The BSIP is currently in draft form, and will be finalised in time for submission to the Department for Transport by the 31st October 2021. Subject to Cabinet review, towards the end of October, the main content of the BSIP is, however, not expected to change significantly.

The BSIP will then be followed by the development of an Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP) which will contain detailed, specific schemes. Further, scheme specific EIAs will be produced in due course, where the schemes are considered to be of an appropriate scale and scope, and where such schemes are expected to lead to significant impacts for any protected group(s).

| | |
|----|--|
| 2. | <p>Who implements or delivers the policy, service or function? State if this is undertaken by more than one team, service, and department including any external partners.</p> <p>The BSIP is a shared plan. Slough Borough Council and the Bus Operators of registered local services in Slough have joint ownership of the BSIP. Subject to feasibility, funding and consultation, the proposed measures will be delivered jointly, through the Enhanced Partnership. However, ultimately, Slough Borough Council has responsibility for leading the development of the plan and submission to the Department for Transport (DfT).</p> <p>The development of the BSIP has been overseen by the Transport team in the Place directorate, Strategy and Infrastructure division. Responsibility for regular progress reviews, liaising with the bus operators and all related administrative activities lies with the Transport team.</p> <p>The DfT is responsible initially for reviewing the Slough BSIP, and for determining any initial levels of funding. Subsequently, the DfT will also be reviewing scheme specific proposals that are set out in local traffic authority Enhanced Partnership Plans (EPPs) – the next stage in the overall process – and determining any grant funding to facilitate the delivery of the proposed schemes and measures.</p> |
| 3. | <p>Who will be affected by this proposal? For example who are the external/internal customers, communities, partners, stakeholders, the workforce etc. Please consider all of the Protected Characteristics listed (more information is available in the background information). Bear in mind that people affected by the proposals may well have more than one protected characteristic.</p> <p>The overall expectation is that this proposal will lead to improvements for all who use bus services in Slough, with wider benefits for all. However, it is acknowledged that bus travel may be used and relied upon by certain protected groups more than others. Broadly speaking, the relevant groups are expected to be affected as follows:</p> <p>Age: Older people are often particularly reliant on public transport and bus travel especially. Service frequency, safety, access to bus stops and the bus station, information availability, and concessional fares are all of particular relevance here. The same applies to young people, including school pupils and students.</p> |

Disability:

As above, people with disabilities are often reliant on public transport. Again, service frequency, safety, access to bus stops and the bus station, information availability, and concessional fares are all of particular relevance.

Pregnancy and maternity:

There may be some specific impacts for this category, relating to access to healthcare and facilities for parents and also young children.

Race:

Generally speaking, there are no specific impacts here. However, there may be some cultural/religious aspects which relate to the perceived and actual benefits or otherwise of public transport services and patronage.

Religion and Belief:

Generally speaking, there are no specific impacts here. However, there may be some impacts, including better access to places of worship. Furthermore, as above, there may be some cultural/religious aspects which relate to the perceived and actual benefits or otherwise of public transport services and patronage.

Gender Reassignment:

No specific impacts associated with this category.

Marriage and Civil Partnership:

No specific impacts associated with this category.

Sex:

No specific impacts associated with this category.

Sexual orientation:

No specific impacts associated with this category.

Details relating to the nature of the various, expected impacts are set out in sections 4 and 5 below.

4. What are any likely positive impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? You may wish to refer to the Equalities Duties detailed in the background information.

The positive impacts for all groups identified above, and indeed for all bus travellers from all groups, are likely to be:

- More frequent bus services
- More reliable journey times
- Lower fares
- Multi-operator ticketing arrangements (a simpler ticket and therefore easier travel)
- Better quality buses
- Improved air quality, reduced carbon emissions
- A more extensive network of services / greater access to places of work and education, shop, services, healthcare, and other destinations
- Further benefits.

Nb the above list of likely benefits is not exhaustive.

Other likely benefits or aspects which are particularly relevant to the specific groups identified are as follows:

Age

More frequent services will be especially helpful to both older people and young people. This will lead to increased perceptions of safety and, for the elderly mainly, greater comfort / minimised physical pain related to traditionally longer waiting times.

A more reliable network of services will also increase connectivity and social inclusion, as well as easier access to a range of destinations.

Disability

As above, similar benefits will arise as for older people.

In addition, the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership is expected to lead to more considerate and more responsive bus companies, 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.

| | |
|----|---|
| | <p>Parents and young children Again, as above, more frequent and reliable services will improve safety (perceived and actual) especially for mothers of young children and young children themselves. Benefits will also be associated with better access to healthcare related destinations. Lower fare costs may well be of particular benefit here too.</p> <p>Race Although it can be hard to demonstrate with empirical evidence, certain cultural attitudes towards public transport do appear to be of particular relevance to certain ethnic and minority groups. Themes include actual and perceived safety on public transport and a preference for car ownership and travel combined with reluctance to travel on public transport for a variety of reasons (termed sometimes as '<i>car culture</i>'). Improved bus services are expected to provide a more attractive, more efficient travel option for all, and hence the benefits here may be particularly attractive to certain groups within the community.</p> <p>Religion and Belief More reliable bus services, reduced waiting times, and a better bus network are all likely to provide a more attractive travel option to those seeking to travel to places of worship across the borough. In addition, there may also be some benefits in terms of safety – again, perceived or actual – for members of certain religious groups who may generally feel vulnerable on public transport.</p> |
| 5. | <p>What are the likely negative impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above? If so then are any particular groups affected more than others and why?</p> <p>There are very few negative impacts anticipated for any of the groups identified above. The only impact that stands out is a possible reduction in parking availability at certain locations across the borough (although no firm plans – or even locations – have been established). This impact would potentially be detrimental to those who have a particularly strong preference to travel by private car. In the wider interests of the borough, the more important need here is for the Council, as local transport authority, to provide more education and to engage with residents better to promote more sustainable forms of travel, including public transport and active travel.</p> |

| | |
|----|--|
| 6. | <p>Have the impacts identified in (4) and (5) above been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data? Please state evidence sources and conclusions drawn (e.g. survey results, customer complaints, monitoring data etc).</p> <p>In preparing the BSIP, the Council has taken into account all relevant and available data sources, including data from the bus operators. Nb in the case of some operators, data is yet to be received and is subject to non-disclosure agreements, due to commercial interests. The analysis of this data is therefore not yet complete.</p> <p>Regarding other sources: The Council is currently hosting a public survey for both bus travellers and non-bus travellers. This survey is currently still active and is due to cease at the end of September 2021. The BSIP team is already engaged in reviewing the responses as they come in, and considering how best to respond to the results. At present, there are no early indications of any issues relating to specific, protected groups, but this will be closely monitored during the finalisation of the BSIP, subsequently the EPP, and then on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Responding to customer complaints and other correspondence are generally considered as part of the general Transport team duties. All relevant information has been discussed and referred to the authors of the BSIP document, either verbally as part of ongoing discussion, or in written form via emails. However, the information here is not extensive and there are no major points of reference relating to any specific group.</p> |
| 7. | <p>Have you engaged or consulted with any identified groups or individuals if necessary and what were the results, e.g. have the staff forums/unions/ community groups been involved?</p> <p>Staff forums and unions have not been consulted. Community groups have been sent information regarding the BSIP and Enhanced Partnership development, via email correspondence, with a request for any comments to be made. One particular group specifically targeted is schools, with head teachers having been contacted for this purpose. Staff resources at the Council are quite limited, at present, but the intention is to engage further with as many relevant organisations and community groups as far as reasonably possible. This process is expected to continue for the lifetime of the national Bus Strategy, specifically the period during which the Government is coordinating the overall realisation of the strategy and making funding streams available for local authorities to bid for.</p> |

| | |
|-----|---|
| 8. | <p>Have you considered the impact the policy might have on local community relations?</p> <p>The BSIP is expected to make a positive contribution here. Public Transport plays a valuable role in the borough, and nationally, in providing greater mobility and accessibility to all members of the community.</p> <p>The BSIP contains a comprehensive list of measures and proposals designed to have the overall effect of improving connectivity within and across the town. This will be achieved through more frequent services, more reliable journeys, better value with fares, and all associated benefits. All of these impacts are expected to be valued by the community, and specific community groups, as referred to in section 4.</p> <p>The expected benefits arising from the improved air quality, reduced carbon emissions, reduced congestion levels, will all be particularly valuable in terms of greater social and environmental sustainability. Better, more reliable access to jobs, education and shopping areas will all be expected to lead to greater economic sustainability, with positive implications for all within the various communities.</p> |
| 9. | <p>What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will mitigate any likely identified negative impacts? For example what plans, if any, will be put in place to reduce the impact?</p> <p>As throughout this review, there are currently no negative impacts anticipated for any protected group, or indeed all members of the public. It is possible that some changes may have some unexpected consequences, including some short term detrimental impacts, but the BSIP is a 'living' document / plan, and any negative impacts will be reviewed and addressed accordingly.</p> <p>Engagement with the public increasingly takes place via online communications, and the various websites run by the Council and the bus operators, and all other sources, will continue to play a vital role in the exchange of information and comments. However, as far as practically possible, greater input from community groups will be actively sought and welcomed by the Council, through current channels and new initiatives to be explored and implemented.</p> |
| 10. | <p>What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented? (The full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented). Please see action plan below.</p> <p>The reporting procedure for the BSIP has not yet been fully finalised. The current proposal is that six monthly reviews will be appropriate to monitor the effectiveness of both the BSIP and the Enhanced partnership. In addition, the Council will respond to all relevant guidance from the DfT, and will comply with all formal reporting requirements.</p> |

The success of all major schemes and measures to follow via the EPP will typically be subject to evaluation reports and regular monitoring, as well as discussion at partnership meetings to come with the bus operators.

In addition, the Transport team will oversee an ongoing review of the overall development and progress of the BSIP and all associated measures, including consideration of the perceived and actual impacts on the public – including, specifically, all protected groups. The Enhanced Partnership will provide greater opportunity for the Council to engage in meaningful discussion with both the bus operators and the public on all relevant matters, and this will be expected to lead to further positive and specific outcomes.

As stated in the question, the full impacts of the BSIP, the EPP, and the partnership will only be realised initially over the lifetime of the National Bus Strategy and the local response, and subsequently beyond. For a long-term, sustainable solution, thorough, ongoing review will be vital, along with continuity and increased commitment to the essential principles and objectives established in the plan.

| | |
|---|---|
| What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply | ✓ |
| Outcome 1: No major change required. The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken | ✓ |
| Outcome 2: Adjust the policy to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified? (Complete action plan). | |
| Outcome 3: Continue the policy despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact (see questions below). (Complete action plan). | |
| Outcome 4: Stop and rethink the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (Complete action plan). | |

Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

At this stage a timetabled Action Plan should be developed to address any concerns/issues related to equality in the existing or proposed policy/service or function. This plan will need to be integrated into the appropriate Service/Business Plan.

| Action | Target Groups | Lead Responsibility | Outcomes/Success Criteria | Monitoring & Evaluation | Target Date | Progress to Date |
|--|---------------|---|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Final version of the BSIP to be submitted to the DfT | All groups | Eddie Hewitt Support from Atkins (consultants) | Satisfactory review and feedback from the DfT, along with any relevant funding award | Review | 31 st October 2021 | On course |
| Regular reviews of the progress of the implementation of the | All groups | Eddie Hewitt / Transport | Satisfactory review findings | Monitoring | Ongoing (minimum every 6 | Planned |

| | | | | | | |
|---|------------|---|---|--------|------------|-----------|
| BSIP and the Enhanced Partnership | | | | | months) | |
| Development of the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP) and submission to the DfT) | All groups | Eddie Hewitt / Transport. Support from Atkins (consultants) | Satisfactory review and feedback from the DfT, along with any relevant funding award for specific schemes proposed. | Review | March 2022 | On course |

Name: Eddie Hewitt, Principle Transport Strategy Officer

Signed:
(Person completing the EIA)

Name: Misha Byrne, Transport Lead

Signed:

.....(Policy Lead if not same as above)

Date: 14th September 2021