

Report to: Lead Member for Transport and Environment
Date of meeting: 17 March 2025
By: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Title: East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan
Purpose: To approve the East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan 2 and the 2025/26 Bus Service Improvement Plan Delivery plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the Bus Service Improvement Plan 2 at Appendix 1 of this report;
 - (2) Approve the Bus Service Improvement Plan 2025/26 Delivery Plan at Appendix 2 of this report;
 - (3) Note that the Director is in discussion with the DfT about reallocating some of the BSIP funding to the Exceat Bridge project as outlined in paragraph 1.6 of this report; and
 - (4) Delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Environment and Transport to implement and make changes to the Bus Service Improvement Plan 2025/26 Delivery Plan as necessary.
-

1 Background Information

1.1 The National Bus Strategy for England was published in March 2021, and included a requirement for local transport authorities (LTAs) outside London to prepare a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The East Sussex BSIP is a joint plan in conjunction with East Sussex Enhanced Partnership (EP) members and agreed between East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and bus operators, who are the voting members of the EP Board. On 25 October 2021, the Lead Member for Transport and Environment approved the Aims, Objectives and Proposals contained in the draft BSIP. These first BSIP served as bidding documents, and the Department for Transport (DfT) awarded ESCC £41.4 million, one of the largest awards to any county council in England. LTAs prepared incremental updates to their BSIPs in 2022. In January 2024, DfT instructed LTAs to prepare a second BSIP update, along with a Bus Connectivity Assessment. ESCC submitted both by the deadline on 12 June 2024.

1.2 On 18 November 2024, the DfT announced Local Authorities' BSIP allocations for 2025/26. The table below summarises East Sussex County Council's allocation.

Table1: ESCC 2025/26 BSIP Allocation

2025/26 Allocation		
Revenue	BSIP Revenue	£5,274,375
	Local Authority Bus Service Operators Grant	£442,709
	BSIP capacity and capability	£94,000
		£5,811,084
Capital	BSIP Capital	£4,555,417
Total 25/26 Allocation		£10,366,501

1.3 One of the requirements of the funding is for an updated BSIP to be submitted to the DfT and published (on the ESCC website) by 31 March 2025 to allow the funding to be released.

1.4 The updated BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan 2 (BSIP2)) (Appendix 1) updates the detail on what has been delivered to date and what will be delivered within the current BSIP period as well as setting out ambitions beyond the current BSIP period. The BSIP2 update is not a bidding document but does clearly set out the long-term ambitions in terms of bus service improvements.

1.5 The shared mission remains the same now as in 2021: to ensure that East Sussex residents and visitors enjoy the highest possible quality bus services that provide a frequent and comprehensive choice, reduce congestion and make a positive contribution to better air quality and decarbonisation.

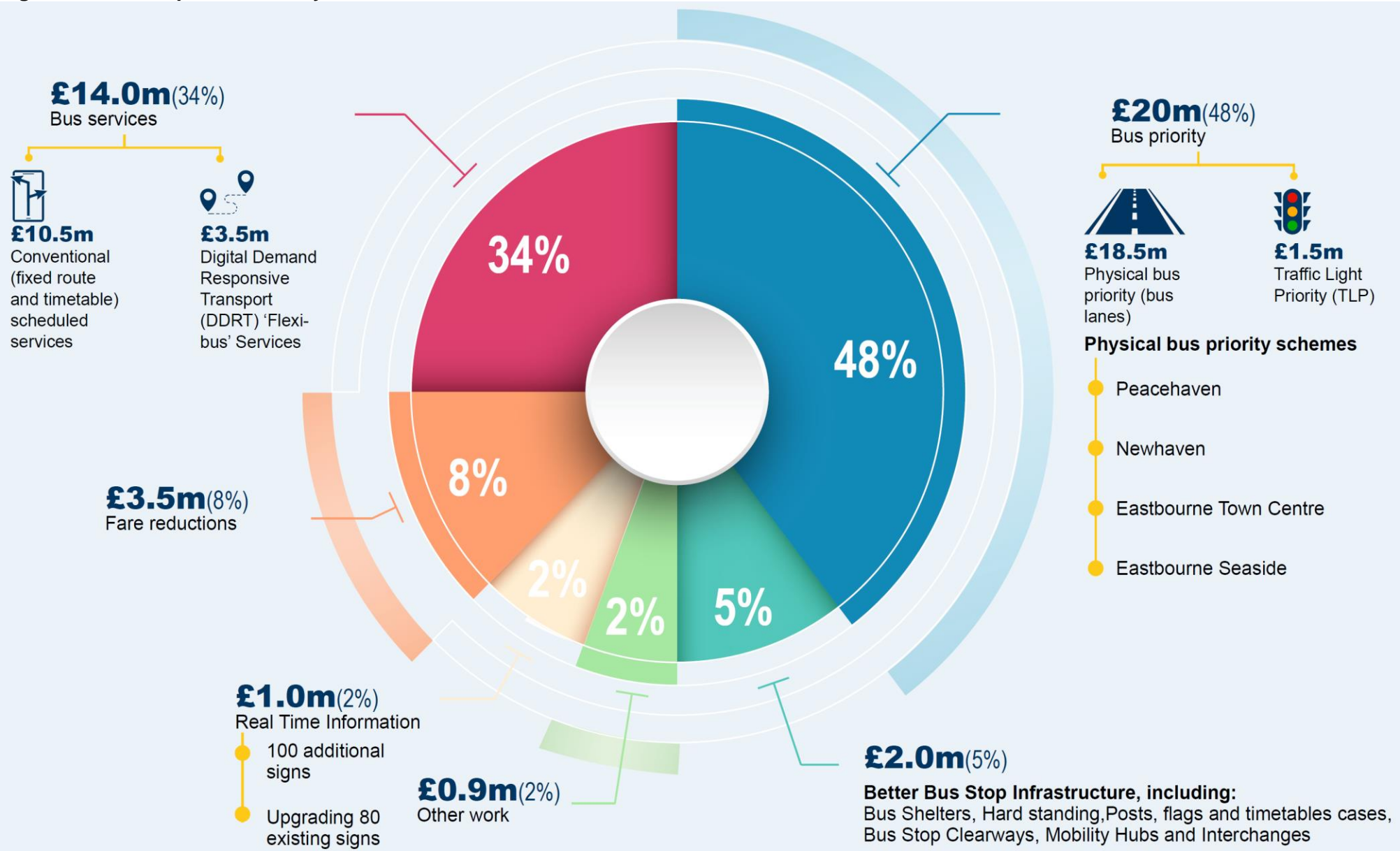
1.6 Just prior to publishing this report, one of the principal bus operators in East Sussex indicated that the replacement of Exceat Bridge is a higher priority for them than some of the proposals within the Bus Service Improvement Plan. Cabinet therefore deferred its decision on the Exceat Bridge project on 4 March 2025 pending discussions and agreement with the Department for Transport about reallocating BSIP funding to the Exceat Bridge replacement scheme.

2 Supporting Information

BSIP1 Spend Overview

2.1 Figure 1 below provides an overview of how the £41.4m BSIP1 funding is being spent. It should be noted that the bus service improvements continue to be funded through the first BSIP (BSIP1) funds to 31 March 2026 and physical bus priority schemes (bus lanes) are expected to be delivered by 31 March 2026 with most of the £18.5m spend being delivered in 2025/26 when the schemes are expected to be constructed.

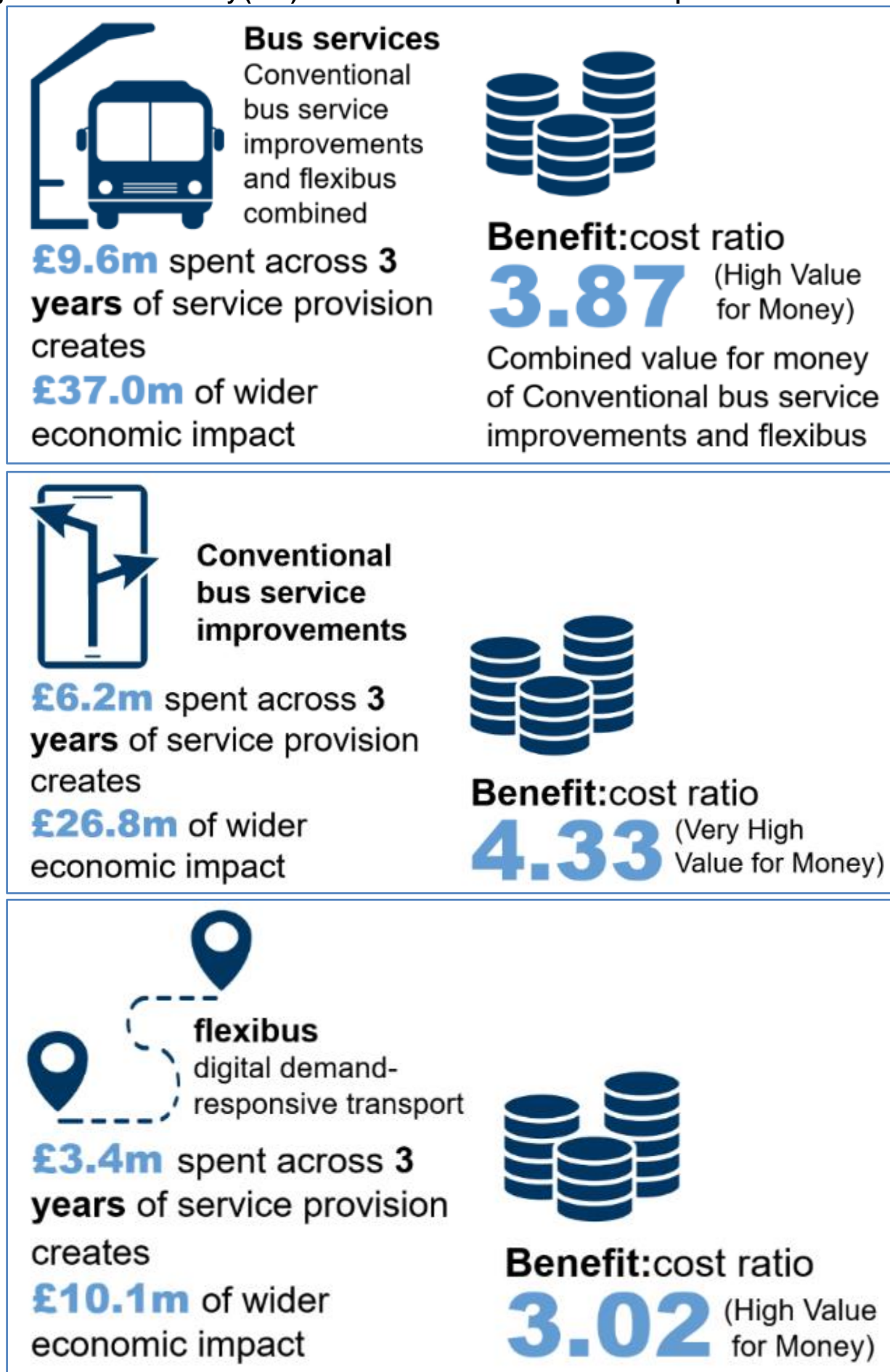
Figure 1: BSIP 1 Spend Summary



2.2 Following this significant investment in improving bus services and the supporting infrastructure alongside fare reductions ESCC has seen passenger numbers grow from their low point during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. On some routes and for some passenger groups, passenger numbers are now higher than they were before the pandemic.

2.3 In-depth evaluation of the social and economic impacts of the investment in bus service improvements was carried out to establish the value for money of investments in bus service improvements. Following the DfT's [Transport Analysis Guidance](#) (TAG) it was found that the overall Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) was 3.87 for all of the BSIP bus services jointly (conventional and flexible) which is considered to be high value for money. The conventional bus service enhancements on their own had a BCR value of 4.33 (which is considered to be very high value for money) and the flexible bus service on its own had a BCR of 3.02 (high value for money). An overview can be found in figure 2.

Figure 2 - Value for Money (VfM) of BSIP Investment in Bus Service Improvements



BSIP 25/26 Funding Apportionment and Delivery Plan

2.4 Table 2 provides an overview of the proposed high-level apportionment of the 2025/26 BSIP funding.

Table 2: Overview of High-Level 2025/26 BSIP Funding Apportionment

		25/26 Allocation	
Capital	Bus Priority	£1,600,000*1	37%
	Bus Stop Infrastructure	£1,250,000	27%
	Real Time Information	£1,250,000	27%
	Traffic Light Priority	£455,000	8%
	Total	£4,555,000	
Revenue	Conventional Bus Services	£1,000,000	17%
	Fares	£4,100,000	71%
	Concessionary Fares - All Day Disabled	£75,000	1%
	Marketing & Communications	£150,000	3%
	Enforcement	£66,000	1%
	Network Management	£60,000	1%
	Capacity and Capability	£360,000	6%
	Total	£5,811,000	

*1 The bus priority allocation may change subject to the outcome of discussions with the DfT in respect of the Exceat bridge project.

2.5 It should be noted that the apportionment of funds may change throughout the year as scheme costs may change. The fares apportionment of £4.2m is based on forecast costs. Actual costs may vary based on passenger demand. It may be necessary to amend BSIP fares during 2025/26 to work within the BSIP budget. The Bus Priority allocation of £2.2m has been allocated to cover forecast overspend on the 4 BSIP1 bus priority schemes. This may vary depending on detailed design cost estimates and cost changes during construction. It may be necessary to amend other capital allocations if there is an overspend or underspend on the bus priority schemes.

2.6 The BSIP 25/26 delivery plan can be found in Appendix 2.

BSIP 2025/26 Delivery Summary

2.7 The BSIP 2025/26 Delivery Summary is set out below:

- **Bus Services**

Maintain existing bus network with current BSIP enhancements.

- **Fares**

£1 and £2 singles: to complement the national £3 fare caps plus a £1 evening fare cap alongside all current BSIP fare reductions.

- **Evening Fare Cap:** Post 7pm £1 fare

- **Maintain all current BSIP Fare reductions:**

- Multi-operator Day tickets
 - Adult

- Under 30
 - Under 19
- 4 Under 19 travel for 50p each with fare paying adult
- Under 19 off peak (after 6pm) for £1
- **Bus stop Infrastructure**
 - Upgrades to bus stops – better shelters, kerbs and more bus stop clearways to allow easier boarding.
 - New bus stops where new demand is clear, e.g. to serve new residential developments.
- **Real Time Information**
Real-Time Passenger Information (RTI): new installations and upgrades of RTI displays with around 60 outdoor displays and 40 indoor displays.
- **Management and operations**
ESCC will retain its BSIP-funded Bus Team in posts in 2025/26 to support the continued delivery of the conventional and flexible bus services and expect longer-term BSIP funding will allow ESCC to maintain this team.

ESCC will continue to operate ANPR enforcement on existing and any new bus lanes, to deter motorists from driving in them to reduce bus journey times and improve punctuality to support passenger growth.
- **Marketing and promotion**
Continue to promote bus use in East Sussex to drive passenger growth. Coordinating marketing across operators and members of the Enhanced Partnership.

BSIP1 Delivery in 2025/26

2.8 Bus service improvements (conventional and flexible) will continue to be funded through the BSIP1 funds to 31 March 2026.

2.9 Physical bus priority schemes (bus lanes) are expected to be delivered through 2025/26 and by 31 March 2026 with most of the £18.5m spend being delivered in 2025/26 when the schemes are expected to be constructed.

2.10 The 4 remaining bus priority schemes that are expected to be delivered through the BSIP1 funding are:

1. Seaside corridor, Eastbourne: £2m,
2. Newhaven: £5.6m,
3. Peacehaven: £8.4m,
4. Eastbourne town centre: £2.4m

2.11 ESCC has allocated £2m of the BSIP capital budget to the BSIP1 bus priority schemes to cover forecast overspend on these schemes.

Ambitions and proposals beyond 2026

2.12 The BSIP2 details ESCC's ambitions and proposals beyond March 2026. An overview of these is provided below:

- **Network improvements**

Aspirations for more bus network improvements beyond the current funding, in 2026 and beyond, subject to further funding being secured.

- **Fares and ticketing**

Maintain existing BSIP fare reductions and explore further fare reductions and simplification.

- look to **reduce fares in real terms**, to ensure bus travel continues to be affordable and attractive for as many residents and visitors as possible
- participation in any **regional ticketing integration** initiatives, **national tap on / tap off initiative** and explore Mobility as a Service (MaaS) deployments

- **Longer term network Development**

2029 and beyond: ESCC supports plans for high-quality mass transit including using strategic mobility hubs to intercept car trips heading into towns.

- **On-street priority and junction improvements**

New on-street bus lanes and junction reconfigurations where they will have a significant impact on bus running times and punctuality.

- **Bus stop Infrastructure**

- Upgrades to bus stops – better shelters, kerbs and more bus stop clearways to allow easier boarding
- New bus stops where new demand is clear, e.g. to serve new residential developments
- New mobility hubs

- **Real time Passenger Information**

Real-Time Passenger Information (RTPI): new installations and upgrades of RTI displays.

- **Marketing and promotion**

Continue to promote bus use and coordinate marketing across members of the EP.

- **Fleet**

Operators continue to invest their own resources in fleet renewal.

- **Zero Emission Buses**

Collaborate with operators to introduce zero emission buses in East Sussex. ESCC will pursue future funding opportunities as they occur.

Next Steps

2.12 Subject to the approval of the Lead Member of the BSIP2 and the BSIP 2025/25 Delivery Plan, these will be submitted to the DfT and published on the ESCC website to allow the 2025/26 funding to be released. The ESCC Bus Team will continue to work on the delivery of the BSIP1 and the delivery of the 2025/26 schemes to deliver continued passenger growth in East Sussex.

3 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 ESCC's mission as a local transport authority is to ensure that East Sussex residents and visitors enjoy the highest possible quality bus services that provide a frequent and comprehensive choice, reduce congestion, and make a positive contribution to better air quality and decarbonisation. This mission is supported by the authority's bus operators who will play a key role in its delivery.

3.2 The original East Sussex BSIP submitted in October 2021 is a highly ambitious plan that sought to stimulate and drive significant improvements to bus services across the local authority area

and the wider region. The BSIP2 details what has been delivered to date, what will be delivered within the current BSIP1 funding period and ambitions beyond. The BSIP2 continues to illustrate ESCC's ambition to deliver the highest possible quality bus services that meet the needs of East Sussex residents and visitors.

3.3 The Lead Member for Transport and Environment is therefore recommended to:

- (1) Approve the Bus Service Improvement Plan 2 at Appendix 1 of this report;
- (2) Approve the Bus Service Improvement Plan 2025/26 Delivery Plan at Appendix 2 of this report;
- (3) Note that the Director is in discussion with the DfT about reallocating some of the BSIP funding to the Exceat Bridge project as outlined in para 1.6; and
- (4) Delegate authority to the Director of Communities, Environment and Transport to implement and make changes to the Bus Service Improvement Plan 2025/26 Delivery Plan as necessary.

RUPERT CLUBB

Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

Contact Officer: Craig Lamberton

Tel. No. 01273 337525

Email: craig.lamberton@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS - All members

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS –

[East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan](#) (BSIP1)