

**NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY
TRANSPORT ACT 2000
KENT ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN
AND
EAST KENT ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP SCHEME**

Version

- 1. Initial EP Plan and Scheme – adopted April 2022**

INTRODUCTION

In October 2021 as a requirement of the new National Bus Strategy (NBS) agenda, Kent County Council (KCC) submitted its first (pre-funding settlement version) Bus Service Improvement plan to Government. The plan was formed in conjunction with the county's 39 bus operators in order to provide a strategic vision of how Kent's bus offer can be improved in line with the requirements of the National Bus Strategy. The plan sets out the existing bus offer in Kent through consideration of the current regulatory set up, the existing approach and known success stories. It also highlights the barriers and challenges that maybe restricting greater bus use.

To support the formation of the plan we undertook significant data-led analysis of the current network. We also looked at associated measures that have been used to identify areas demanding attention. The plan then uses feedback from bus operators, Kent residents and other key stakeholders to consider potential areas for improvement and future development. These are captured under a set of key principles and more detailed initiatives. While some of these may be delivered within existing budgets, others will require NBS funding to succeed.

Delivering on the National Bus Strategy

To deliver the aims and objectives of the NBS, the Government has set requirements on LTAs and bus operators. These must be adhered to in order to ensure the availability of existing national funding streams as well as a potential new funding allocation through the NBS process. These requirements are as follows:

- To produce and publish the initial version of a BSIP
- To introduce a new statutory path for the regulatory set up of bus services in the county by March 2022, including the use of franchising or Enhanced Partnerships.

Enhanced Partnership or franchising?

In June 2021, following a statutory decision by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, KCC identified that in line with Government guidance it would be forming an Enhanced Partnership (EP) for Kent from March 2022. The EP model will allow KCC to build on the positive relationships it already has with the county's bus operators, in order to seek to deliver the aspirations of the NBS.

The use of franchising was given due consideration but was not deemed appropriate at this time. Franchising is not automatically available to non-mayoral authorities (instead requiring approval from the Secretary of State) and there are considerable questions over the implications on resourcing and subsequent service levels which could be delivered in the county. KCC also already has strong relationships with its operators which can be the basis for more formal statutory EP Schemes in the future.

Kent has an active bus market with 39 operators currently registered with the Traffic Commissioner to operate services in the county. Close ties already exist between operators and KCC through such initiatives as the Kent Travel Saver, Kent's eight Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) and through management of contracted local bus services. It is felt that these existing relationships will form a strong base for

establishing an EP model. KCC received no objections from operators to this approach during engagement conducted for the production of the BSIP.

The formation of our three Enhanced Partnership Schemes have therefore been identified as the appropriate mechanism for KCC and its bus operators to meet the requirement of the NBS in introducing *'a new statutory path for the regulatory set up of bus services in the county by March 2022'*.

Objectives and Key Principles

Through a combination of our Bus Service Improvement Plan, our Enhanced Partnership Plan and the three associated schemes, KCC and Kent's Bus Operators intend to meet the requirements of and deliver on the aspirations of the National Bus Strategy.

At a local level, we have worked to ensure that our BSIP and our resulting EPs reflect the aspirations of bus users, potential bus users and stakeholders and have therefore used engagement activity in the form of public consultation and stakeholder workshops to help us understand what is most important to our residents and what they would like to see delivered through our BSIP and EP schemes.

This has enabled us to form a set of Key Principles which have informed the priorities in our BSIP and which will also be used to establish the detail of the first and future generations of our EPs. These principles are:

Regulation

1 Form Enhanced Partnership Agreements covering all public buses in Kent, setting ambitious targets with respect to punctuality, journey times, vehicle quality and accessibility.

Customer

2 Put the customer at the heart of everything we do through developing a passenger charter agreed through EPs and by developing the Bus Services Feedback portal.

Network developments

3 Seek to secure all available funding and prioritise its use to 1) recover from the pandemic and stabilise the current network, and 2) further develop and enhance Kent's public transport through a range of initiatives.

4 Undertake a countywide and then localised network analysis to help inform the use of existing and new funding, with a view to providing service enhancements for rural communities where levels are currently lacking.

5 Continue to support the development of the community transport sector in Kent to supplement the core bus network.

Innovation and digital accessibility

6 Consider and embrace innovative transport solutions such as DRT and MaaS models as possible alternatives to the private car and make use of BRT where appropriate.

Fares and ticketing

7 Provide flexible and better value ticketing options and use technology to provide cashless and ticketless solutions on all operators' services.

Public transport information

8 Improve the quality and accessibility of public transport information, including the provision of a one-stop-shop for live bus times and fares information and making greater use of technology e.g. for voice announcements.

Accessibility

9 Strive to improve the levels of physical and digital accessibility both on buses and through infrastructure to ensure a fully accessible network for disabled passengers.

Environment and air quality

10 Promote the role of buses in solving air quality issues and work with operators and other stakeholders to improve emissions standards. This would include using funding to support the move from diesel to emission-free vehicles.

Infrastructure, network management and new developments

11 Put buses at the centre of decision making in respect of new road schemes, planning and developments, and support bus operators and services in KCC's role as the highway authority.

COMPETITION TEST

The Kent County Council has undertaken an assessment of the impacts of the EP Plan and Scheme (for introduction from April 2022) on competition and believes it will not or is unlikely to have a significantly adverse effect on competition, for the purposes of Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000

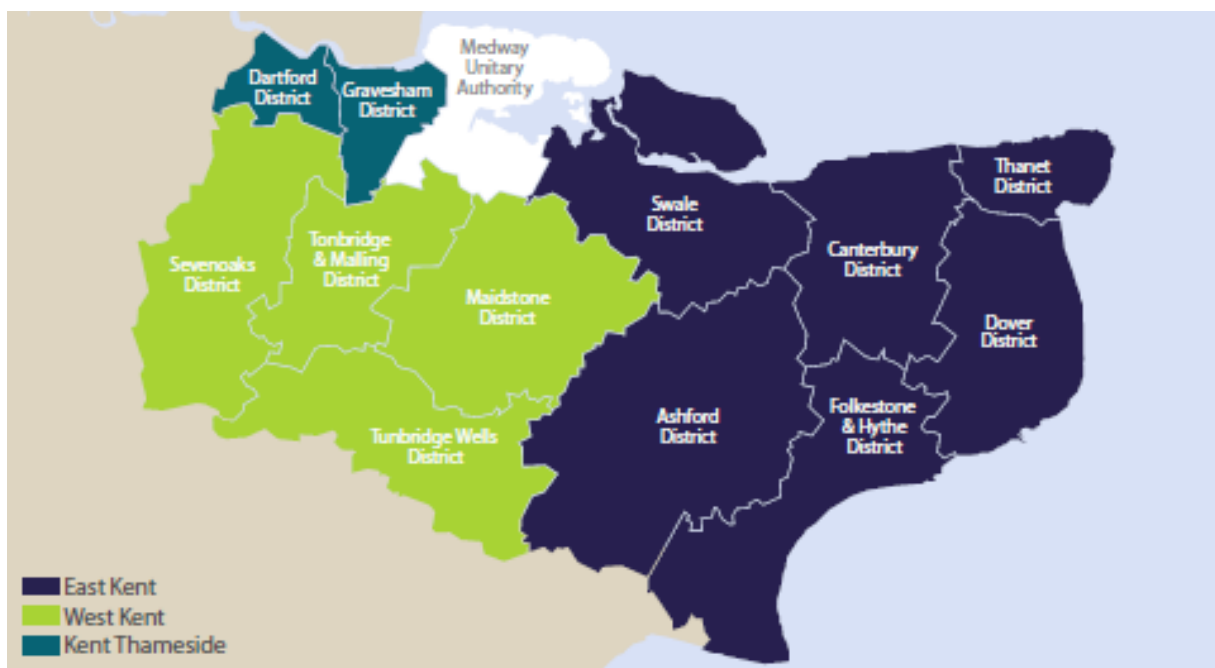
THE KENT ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN FOR BUSES IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY: KENT COUNTY COUNCIL.

1. GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

Kent is the most heavily populated non-metropolitan authority in the UK. The county is made up of a mixture of larger urban centres such as Canterbury and Maidstone, smaller towns and villages and more rural areas. The county sees unique situations for certain locations with for instance the Gravesham and Dartford areas having close proximity to London and the Dover and Folkestone & Hythe areas being most heavily impacted by cross-channel traffic. It also sees variations across its area in relation to key indices such as employment levels, levels of deprivation and education, and it has 12 borough / district authorities operating in a two-tier administrative set up. There are also variations with respect to bus service provision and which bus operators run services. For example Stagecoach and Arriva are the major national group operators in the east and west of the county respectively.

The above means that the county's geographical make up is not conducive to a single EP arrangement. As a result KCC intends to introduce an EP and related EP Plan covering its entire geographical area but, within it, introduce three EP Schemes. This will allow the overall aims, objectives and targets of Kent's BSIP to be considered and reflected across the county as a whole, but with delivery tailored for different local circumstances, needs and operating territories.

Kent's EP Schemes are intended as follows:



Kent has borders with four other LTAs: East Sussex, London, Medway (Unitary Authority) and Surrey. KCC has held conversations with all four LTAs to discuss the overall approach to BSIPs, common issues between areas and to seek agreement for collaborative working with respect to cross boundary issues. We have and will continue this dialogue with these authorities throughout the EP process.

The differing characteristics and circumstances of each authority means that a joint BSIP was not deemed appropriate. However there is a strong willingness to work together and move forward on key issues such as ticketing and cross boundary implications of passenger charters.

Particular consideration was given to a joint BSIP and EP Plan between Kent and Medway. However this was not pursued for a variety of reasons including:

- In comparison to overall mileage there are only a small number of routes which operate between the two areas
- There is a differing geographical and social-economic make-up between the two areas
- There is a difference in administrative set-up between the two LTAs. Medway is a Unitary Authority holding responsibility over areas such as planning, parking and bus shelters. In Kent these powers are shared with our district partners under a two-tier system.

Medway Council will be an invited attendee at the Enhanced Partnership Board.

Kent's bus operators have indicated support for this approach.

2. PLAN PERIOD AND REVIEW

This first version of the Kent Enhanced Partnership Plan is intended to cover a five-year period from April 2022 until end of March 2027. The EP Board may propose variations to the Plan outside of the formal review dates, which if agreed will be subject to the statutory consultation process.

In keeping with Kent's Bus Service Improvement Plan, this first version of the Kent EP Plan therefore remains aspirational assuming either receipt of the full NBS funding ask or that during this initial five year period, there will be other opportunities to attract alternative funding or deliver initiatives in a different way or using the Council's own resources.

The process to review the EP Plan would commence at the start of the final year of the initial period (from April 2026) leading to adoption of a new plan and associated schemes from April 2027. Review of the Plan would be conducted using the established meeting and governance structure through EP Schemes Monitoring Groups making recommendations to the EP Board for approval.

Changes to operational and financial circumstances will be reflected in updated versions of the Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan which will be subject to six monthly review and through the obligations and commitments made within our EP schemes which will be subject to a controlled but simple and responsive mechanism for variation.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

KCC has a number of strategic and operational plans in place across its Highways and Transportation division. At the forefront of these is Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4): Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2031. Kent's LTP brings together the authority's transport policies by looking at local schemes and issues as well as those with a countywide or national significance. Within LTP4, KCC has identified bus improvements as a key strategic priority. As the county recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, travel patterns change and wider factors such as cross-channel traffic variances due to Brexit have an effect on the county's roads, KCC has embarked on a review of LTP4, with the intention to establish a new plan.

In any new LTP, KCC will set out policies and proposals that reflect the BSIP and our EP Plan that further its delivery. Sitting alongside LTP4 are a number of more detailed plans and strategies such as the Highways Asset Management Plan 21/22 – 25/26, Kent's Active Travel Strategy and the Freight Action Plan. It is intended that Kent's EP Plan will sit alongside the LTP and vice versa and will also likely align with a number of district LTPs.

4. CURRENT POSITION AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

In a large rural county like Kent, the bus network plays a major role in connecting remote, less populated areas with essential services and local centres. For this reason, KCC and Kent's bus operators have fought to protect service levels through a combination of funding and partnership working. However, it is acknowledged that in every area of provision there is more that can be done. Our Bus Service Improvement Plan sets out a range of ambitious initiatives to address identified challenges and shortcomings across all aspects of service provision.

As is the case in most parts of the UK, bus services in Kent operate in a de-regulated market outside the control of KCC. The Department for Transport, not KCC, is responsible for the licensing of operators and services. In this de-regulated environment, operators provide services at their own discretion and set vital features such as routes, timetables, frequencies, and fares. Around 90% of all bus journeys in the county are provided on this commercial basis. They do not attract subsidy from KCC but run only for the revenue generated by passenger usage.

Throughout the pandemic, KCC has worked very closely with all its transport providers to ensure that services continue to operate and are provided in line with emerging guidance. Our relationships with bus operators in particular have strengthened as a result of this. From a financial perspective, KCC supported the network by maintaining payments to operators for contracted bus services, and freezing pre Covid reimbursement levels for concessionary schemes. This, coupled with other support

provided by the Government, ensured that buses continued to operate, and we avoided a significant reduction to service levels in Kent.

However, it is acknowledged that this challenge remains. Covid restrictions resulted in a fall of 66% of passengers on Kent's bus network in the 2020/21 year. KCC continues to work closely with operators and collectively we are confident that ongoing financial support in the form of the Bus Recovery Grant and concessionary travel payments will sustain the network until April 2022. At this point, exceptional funding from Government is expected to cease, and reimbursement will be based on actual usage. Consideration also needs to be given to the pressure on KCC finances, particularly in discretionary areas and with challenging operating conditions caused by increased congestion and running times, and rises in costs such as fuel, wages and insurance. For these reasons, it has been difficult for the council and Kent's bus operators to be ambitious in recent years.

More recently, the national driver shortage has created a resource barrier to providing bus services in parts of the County and is anticipated to exasperate cost increases in this area leading to further pressure on the sustainability of commercially provided services and the costs for the Council in securing subsidised replacements.

As well as any additional funding that might be forthcoming, the NBS and BSIP represent a positive framework for supporting network recovery. Initiatives in the form of enhancements to public transport information and ticketing will be used to encourage passengers to the network with a view firstly to recover patronage to pre Covid levels and ultimately to exceed them. Patronage targets will be set on an increasing scale through our Enhanced Partnership process.

Taking account of the above, KCC is prioritising initiatives that will maintain commercial and subsidised service levels consistent with or similar to the pre-pandemic network. Having secured this base level of provision, additional funding will be used to deliver a range of aspirations that will, be prioritised through future stakeholder engagement and taking account of a criteria being developed by the Council that will consider; recovery, sustainability and long-term legacy, policy context and value for money.

More generally, whilst KCC and Kent's bus operators have continued to maintain standards and levels of provision, it is acknowledged that there is scope for significant improvement. In respect of bus information, ticketing, fares, infrastructure, innovation and digital accessibility, KCC has identified specific areas for development. These are outlined in respective sections of the BSIP, along with initiatives for improvement in each area.

5. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Engagement and Consultation

Although formal consultation is not required by the BSIP guidance, KCC has wanted to ensure that its plan reflected local need and aspiration. The Council has therefore sought to engage as fully as the timescale allowed, working to a principle of light touch consultation to establish resident's priorities and then to supplement this feedback with more detailed discussions with stakeholders in order to understand what the feedback

means in their area or for their clients. An all-operator forum has met and then been supplemented by ongoing discussions with appointed operator representatives.

An independent Market Research Company have been engaged to analyse and report on feedback and suggestions made through the Public Consultation and the Stakeholder Working Groups.

This process has been used to inform the pre-funding settlement draft of the BSIP. On understanding of the financial settlement, it is intended to more traditionally consult on the updated draft and gain feed-back on proposed priorities to align with the first Enhanced Partnership Schemes in April 2022.

The following formal engagement activities and meetings have been undertaken;

Activity	Consultees / Stakeholders Involved
Engagement with Neighbouring Local Authority	Medway Council, East Sussex County Council, Surrey County Council, Transport for London.
Operator engagement	All Kent Bus Operators, leading to the formation of a working group.
Operator Initiative Survey	All Kent Bus Operators
Operator Data Request Survey	All Kent Bus Operators
Kent BSIP : Stakeholder Workshop – Kent BSIP Principles	Kent District Councils, Medway Council, KCC Officers, Passenger Focus, Chamber of Commerce, Youth Council, Disability Groups, other user groups.
Member Briefings	KCC Elected Members
District Council Engagement – Kent BSIP. Local Input to Initiatives	12 Kent District Councils
Transport Focus Engagement and attendance of workshops	Transport Focus
Department for Work and Pensions – Input to BSIP Initiatives	Kent Offices of the Department for Work and Pensions
Public Consultation : to establish priorities for users and provision of service suggestions.	All Kent residents.

BSIP Consultation Results

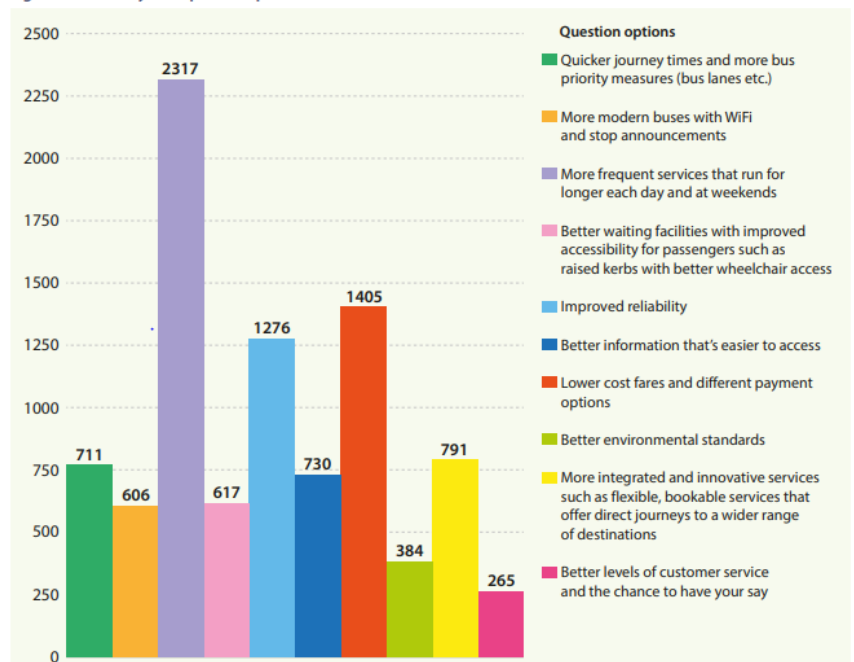
The following extract from Kent’s BSIP demonstrates the results from the public consultation undertaken for initial BSIP preparation.

They were asked to choose their top three from the following:

- More modern buses with Wi-Fi and stop announcements
- More frequent services that run for longer each day and at weekends
- Better information that's easier to access
- Better environmental standards
- More integrated and innovative services such as flexible, bookable services that offer direct journeys to a wider range of destinations
- Better levels of customer service and the chance to have your say.

Almost 3,500 responses have been received and these are summarised opposite.

Figure 6. Summary of response to public consultation



Data

In order to support the understanding of trends across the network KCC engaged with operators to obtain data relating to range of measurables including; patronage, revenue, mode share, running times and reliability.

With the requirement to deliver the NBS at a fast pace, KCC utilised a variety of datasets already available through our current activity. This was complemented by further research and data from operators, requested during development of the EPs. Moving forward, we are looking to improve our planning resources and tools to support delivery of our EPs.

Data collected from operators pre-Covid demonstrated that buses were operating at 77.7% on time across the network. Such performance highlights the challenge of building a reliable schedule, indicating high variability in traffic congestion in Kent. Statistics collected from operators in June 2021 presented an average of 85% service on time.

OTP results presented earlier clearly highlight the challenges faced by operators when trying to set a workable and reliable timetable. While some counties achieved well over 90% bus on time and the England outside London average reached 83,5% in 2019, Kent's estimated OTP figure was 77.7% on time in November 2019. The main causes of variability include variable volumes of traffic, roadworks, and the impact of the M25.

More detail obtained through ABOD shows the peak hours are even more affected, while performance in off-peak and weekends are better overall.

The analysis of existing schedules demonstrates that the planned commercial speed of services is around 24.7km/h on average in the morning peak for most service types, except for P&R and urban services which reach around 19km/h for the same period.

In some areas the bus network in Kent is significantly affected by traffic congestion. This is visible through our journey time analysis. An analysis of main congestion points extracted from the Kent traffic model clearly highlights locations around the M25 in Dartford, Canterbury, Dover and Tunbridge Wells as being particularly affected. Not surprisingly, these locations almost all coincide with the key bus travel corridors identified in Kent.

Mode share

The KCC traffic and public transport model has estimated a theoretical pre-Covid public transport mode share (bus + rail) for Kent and Medway of around 9.2% between 7am and 7pm.

Dover, Folkstone & Hythe, Maidstone and Ashford districts present the lowest public transport mode share (below 8%), although it should be noted that figures in Dover and Folkestone & Hythe may be impacted by cross-channel traffic.

Our journey time analysis concentrated on low network coverage for these districts and also highlighted pockets of deprived population which reinforce these results.

6. PLAN OBJECTIVES AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

The overall imperative for KCC and Kent's Bus Operators is to recover from the impacts of the pandemic, sustaining current service levels and offerings and then to aspire to drive genuine improvement across all areas of bus service provision in Kent.

To inform the formation Kent's Bus Service Improvement Plan, in conjunction with Kent's Bus Operators and other stakeholders we developed and agreed **11 Key Principles** to act as the focus for the plan.

Key Principles

Regulation

1 Form Enhanced Partnership Agreements covering all public buses in Kent, setting ambitious targets with respect to punctuality, journey times, vehicle quality and accessibility.

Customer

2 Put the customer at the heart of everything we do through developing a passenger charter agreed through EPs and by developing the Bus Services Feedback portal.

Network developments

3 Seek to secure all available funding and prioritise its use to 1) recover from the pandemic and stabilise the current network, and 2) further develop and enhance Kent's public transport through a range of initiatives.

4 Undertake a countywide and then localised network analysis to help inform the use of existing and new funding, with a view to providing service enhancements for rural communities where levels are currently lacking.

5 Continue to support the development of the community transport sector in Kent to supplement the core bus network.

Innovation and digital accessibility

6 Consider and embrace innovative transport solutions such as DRT and MaaS models as possible alternatives to the private car and make use of BRT where appropriate.

Fares and ticketing

7 Provide flexible and better value ticketing options and use technology to provide cashless and ticketless solutions on all operators' services.

Public transport information

8 Improve the quality and accessibility of public transport information, including the provision of a one-stop-shop for live bus times and fares information and making greater use of technology e.g. for voice announcements.

Accessibility

9 Strive to improve the levels of physical and digital accessibility both on buses and through infrastructure to ensure a fully accessible network for disabled passengers.

Environment and air quality

10 Promote the role of buses in solving air quality issues and work with operators and other stakeholders to improve emissions standards. This would include using funding to support the move from diesel to emission-free vehicles.

Infrastructure, network management and new developments

11 Put buses at the centre of decision making in respect of new road schemes, planning and developments, and support bus operators and services in KCC's role as the highway authority.

Initiatives

To support the achievement of these Key Principles and using feedback received through Public Consultation and our Stakeholder workshops, we then identified our range of **Initiatives**. In our initial EP scheme documents we have included facilities, measures and obligations which can be delivered with no funding from the NBS

process. The Bespoke variation method outlined within the EP Scheme will be utilised to add further initiatives included below should funding permit.

Reference	Network Development	Requires NBS Funding?
NDI 1	KCC will secure all available funding and prioritise its use to support services, alongside BSOG, that have become unsustainable at reduced passenger levels until such time as other NBS initiatives drive growth.	YES
NDI 2	KCC and Kent's bus operators will deliver a range of Year 1 service initiatives based on feedback gathered through engagement activity with operators, stakeholders and the general public. Initiatives will be prioritised based on evaluation criteria which takes into account factors such as network gap analysis (e.g. accessibility to town centres), sustainability, value for money and deliverability.	YES
NDI 3	KCC and Kent's bus operators will deliver a range of Year 2 and 3 service initiatives which address areas with poorer accessibility levels identified through our Network Gap Analysis. In these areas more detailed analysis will be undertaken which will consider changes to the commercial and subsidised bus network, taking account of over and underserved corridors, the use of DRT and other alternative solutions and the Total Transport Concept, including the relationship with other layers of transport provision such as home to school and patient transport services.	YES
NDI 4	KCC and Kent's bus operators will seek to increase the proportion of the population within the 15, 30 and 45-minute catchment of the closest defined town centre for their district by improving corridor performance, service levels, speed and integration, including during off-peak hours.	
NDI 5	KCC will review its criteria for the support of council-funded socially necessary bus services to ensure it continues to reflect the travel needs of the community and is in line with the changing requirements of the NBS.	
NDI 6	KCC and Kent's district councils will produce a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), to ensure that improvements to bus services are fully considered and delivered with consideration of new planning developments.	

Reference	Alternative Delivery Models	Requires NBS Funding?
ADMI 1	KCC will continue to develop Fastrack Kent Thameside to delivery of full network, roll out the service to Dover and give consideration to the future relationship between Fastrack Kent Thameside and Crossrail.	
ADMI 2	KCC will establish a policy to ensure opportunities for BRT are explored, including the creation of a housing development triggerpoint for larger scale developments.	
ADMI 3	KCC will continue to support the community transport sector. We will continue to refine our toolkit to support the sector's growth, and continue to run grant schemes that fund the delivery of new community transport services.	YES
ADMI 4	KCC and Kent's bus operators will consider areas where a Superbus approach to network development could be implemented to deliver improvements in infrastructure, fares, reliability and journey times and achieve a 'premium' service standard.	YES
ADMI 5	KCC and Kent's bus operators will consider the role that DRT, feeder services and other alternative modes can play in solving rural connectivity issues.	YES

Reference	Fares and Ticketing	Requires NBS Funding?
FTI 1	KCC and Kent's bus operators will introduce a multi-operator ticket covering the Kent network and through this will seek to introduce a simpler, more attractive and flexible ticketing offer.	YES
FTI 2	KCC and Kent's bus operators will look to identify and deliver specific fares and ticketing schemes, with a particular focus on initiatives which support recovery from the pandemic and access to tourism, employment opportunities and the support of Kent businesses.	YES
FTI 3	KCC will support Kent's bus operators to develop their ETM and related back-office capabilities to enable the introduction of innovative and user-friendly ticketing offers including full network acceptance of contactless payments and fare capping.	YES
FTI 4	KCC will consider the fares, ticketing and backoffice requirements required to enable the introduction of ticketing solutions covering bus, rail and other modes to support the MaaS concept of service delivery.	
FTI 5	Through our EP Schemes, KCC and Kent's bus operators will seek to support the acceptance of multi-operator tickets on common sections of route.	
FTI 6	KCC will seek to continue to support home to school travel through initiatives such as the Kent Travel Saver, which make journeys more attractive and cost effective for the user.	YES

Reference	Infrastructure and Priority	Requires NBS Funding?
IPI 1	KCC will ensure that there is continuous focus on the quality of marked bus stops across Kent. KCC will look to provide high quality boarding and alighting points for passengers as far as possible and continue to drive forward improvements in accessibility and appearance across Kent's bus stop assets.	YES
IPI 2	Working with borough, district and parish councils, KCC will seek to deliver improvements in the provision and maintenance of bus shelters across the county, placing particular emphasis on using advances in technology to incorporate environmental benefits.	YES
IPI 3	Through working with borough and district councils, KCC will seek to ensure that as Kent's bus network develops it provides appropriate operator facilities such as bus stands and driver amenities.	YES
IPI 4	With a focus on integration, KCC will create a hierarchy for bus stops in Kent to identify key locations that have high levels of connectivity, either with other bus services or other transport modes. We will seek to deliver improvements beyond the 'standard' offer at these locations, with bike parking facilities, higher levels of passenger information, etc.	YES
IPI 5	KCC will use advances in technology to ensure Kent's bus stops are modern, safe and of a high standard of appearance, to enhance the user experience.	YES
IPI 6	KCC will look to evaluate the merits and feasibility of two bus priority schemes per year in each EP Scheme. These will take account of bus congestion modelling identifying pinch points that affect bus journey times, and consider local context and sensitivity, as well as potential network and passenger gain.	YES
IPI 7	KCC will support infrastructure and highway schemes to support the development of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects in Kent.	YES

Reference	Environment and Air Quality	Requires NBS Funding?
EAQ1 1	KCC and Kent's bus operators will explore all opportunities to secure funding to improve emission standards on buses operating across Kent, with a particular focus on moving parts of the network towards zero emissions.	YES
EAQ1 2	KCC will form an air quality corridor hierarchy taking account of Kent Air Quality Management Areas, and use this as the basis on which to prioritise future funding for zero emission corridors.	YES
EAQ1 3	KCC will use the EP process to establish minimum standards for emissions on buses operating in Kent, seeking to introduce a targeted approach to improve standards over the term of the EP Schemes.	
EAQ1 4	KCC and Kent's bus operators will actively promote the environmental benefits of the bus through better promotion of the network and the comparable impact of bus use against other modes of transport.	

Reference	Innovation and Digital Accessibility	Requires NBS Funding?
IDA 1	KCC will support operators financially to help them secure enhanced ETMs, associated backoffice function and TransXChange and Real Time Information capability. This will support a range of initiatives in respect of Real Time Information, ticketing and reliability.	
IDA1 2	KCC will embrace the use of modern technologies and software to support a dataled approach to network planning.	YES
IDA1 3	KCC will deliver a MaaS pilot scheme in the North West Kent EP Scheme areas. We will look to expand the use of this platform to other parts of the county subject to the pilot providing a multi modal approach to service delivery.	YES
IDA1 4	KCC will seek to embed the use of new innovation and technology to improve bus passenger experience, e.g. next stop announcement technology, the development of a passenger occupancy tool, audio announcements at bus stops and capital grants for supporting the introduction of RTI displays at strategic bus stop locations.	YES

Reference	Public Transport Information	Requires NBS Funding?
PTII 1	KCC will develop the Kent Connected journey planner in order to provide enhanced journey and route planning functionality.	
PTII 2	KCC will provide a one-stop-shop for Kent public transport information including an interactive bus map with pop up timetables, access to e-ticketing, links to bus operator websites, pop up timetables, ticketing and fares information available via web and app platforms.	YES
PTII 3	KCC will develop the use of bus stop QR codes to provide instant access to operators' websites, fares, timetables, RTI, journey planner and other facilities such as links to other websites, tickets and events.	YES
PTII 4	KCC and Kent's bus operators will establish an agreed minimum standard of information to be displayed at all marked bus stops.	YES
PTII 5	KCC and Kent's bus operators will proactively promote the bus network and the role of buses in supporting strategic priorities and other activity such as tourism, environmental benefits, road safety etc. We will work with key partners to ensure public transport is publicised with events.	YES
PTII 6	KCC and Kent's bus operators will look to agree a common identity and approach to the design of publicity relating to all bus services around the county.	YES

Reference	Highways & Network Management	Requires NBS Funding?
HNMI 1	KCC will ensure that new/upgraded road schemes delivered by the authority fully consider the requirements of buses with respect to access and design. In line with the NBS, KCC will also ensure that new/upgraded road schemes fully consider bus improvements or bus priority. If this is not possible, schemes will clearly detail why this is the case. KCC will strongly encourage its partners to follow similar principles for schemes not delivered by the LTA.	
HNMI 2	As part of its network management duty, KCC will actively consider how the punctuality and reliability of buses can be improved through the management of the network in terms of traffic signalling, junction changes, traffic flow control etc. The Kent County model will be used to identify congestion hotspots as part of this process to target where change is required.	YES
HNMI 3	KCC will re-purpose and re-launch its Punctuality Improvement Partnerships (PIPS) to ensure that they have the biggest impact on reliability/punctuality on the ground. KCC will work with bus operators to agree an appropriate format for the groups and closely link outputs to Enhanced Partnership targets.	
HNMI 4	Working with district partners KCC will actively consider the management of parking issues which cause bus routes to be blocked including a) illegitimate parking on existing restrictions and b) potential new restrictions to ease service flow.	
HNMI 5	KCC will establish a roadworks review taskforce (held quarterly), including representatives from KCC Highways, bus operators, utility companies, Highways England and any other key stakeholders. The meetings will focus on the link between works on the highway and bus service operation and will enable discussion at a strategic level, with key outputs subsequently picked up by PIPs for delivery.	
HNMI 6	KCC will continue to support the position of a Soft Landscapes Technical Support Officer for bus routes, to ensure that vegetation issues effecting bus passage are expedited as far as possible. A review will be undertaken on how emergency requests are dealt with.	

Reference	Highways & Network Management	Requires NBS Funding?
HNMI 7	KCC will continue to consider the most appropriate means of enforcing bus gates and bus lanes through liaison with district councils. The potential for KCC to manage a central common back office will be explored as part of this process.	YES
HNMI 8	To support the initiatives in this section, KCC is seeking to use NBS funding to secure dedicated staff resource and software to support highways issues. Posts are likely to include a Major Projects Highway Engineer focused on bus priority schemes and other more major bus projects, a Highway Engineer focused on smaller, more localised interventions to support bus reliability and access, and a Parking/ Roadworks Co-ordination Officer picking up enforcement issues through liaison with district councils and roadworks issues emerging from roadworks review meetings (see HNMI5).	YES
HNMI 9	KCC will work with district councils to undertake a countywide review of parking policy and its relationship with bus usage.	YES

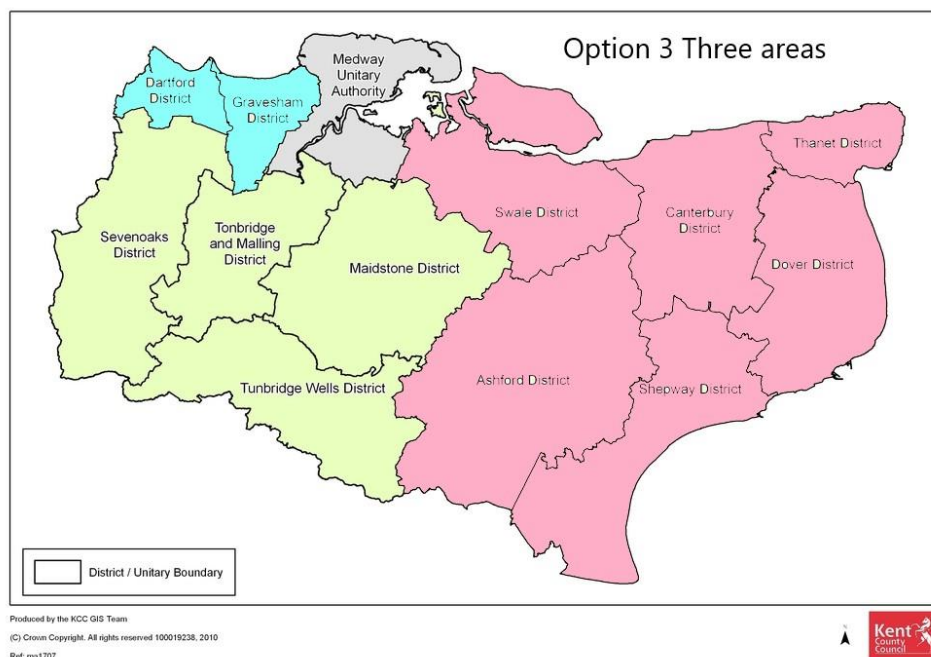
7. DELIVERY

As well as any additional funding that might be forthcoming, the EP plan represents a positive framework for supporting network recovery. Although it is not fundamentally changing the deregulated and commercial nature of the bus network, KCC is intent on forming Enhanced Partnership schemes that promote close working relationships with operators and stakeholders and permit more direct influence on standards and outcomes.

These are formal partnerships targeted at improving bus services. Although they are published by the local transport authority, they are close partnerships between bus operators and the local authorities. Other parties will play a part, including district councils, passenger groups and businesses, and there will be consultation, including obtaining public views, on what needs to be improved and what the priorities should be.

We have formed one **Enhanced Partnership Plan** for Kent (this plan), covering all of the county to take effect from April 2022. This will set out a strategic view on how the partners will improve bus services in Kent and will take most of its content from this BSIP. It will be updated every 5 years.

Sitting beneath our Kent Plan will be three **Enhanced Partnership Schemes** as shown in the map below:



The three areas would be:

1. **East Kent** covering Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Swale and Thanet

2. **West Kent** covering Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells Districts.

3. **Kent Thameside** consisting of the Dartford and Gravesham Districts

These schemes provide a more tailored approach for each of these smaller areas setting out more detail of the plans for improvements to be made and taking on board local views. They will set out intentions for the following few years and will be updated from time to time as the degree of success of the early schemes become clear and the demand for bus services changes.

Current Quality Bus Partnerships

In many areas of Kent, voluntary Quality Bus Partnerships (QBPs) between the county and district councils and the local bus operators have been in place for a number of years. The Enhanced Partnership schemes will build on and in most cases carry forward the positive work achieved by these arrangements. The governance proposals are designed to ensure that groups are in place to reflect the legal requirements of the EP (e.g. overall EP Board, EP Scheme Monitoring Groups etc) but that these are complemented by more localised groups reflecting QBPs.

Improved bus services

The agreements with the bus operators will be aimed at bouncing back from the pandemic period, during which far fewer people used buses in Kent. Once pre-Covid levels of passengers have been achieved, the EP will be used to go for growth by increasing the bus share of the transport market and to position the bus as a green form of transport.

A summary of our proposed measures are below Our ability to introduce a number of these will depend on the availability of funding. The highlights are:

- Increased bus services including during the evenings and to out of town employment sites
- Lower fares, including more flexible seasons and better tickets where you need to use more than one operator
- More use of smartcards and mobile phone tickets to make purchases even easier, with rail tickets and even car hire available on the same app
- Better integration with other transport modes
- Innovative ways of retaining rural transport links, such as demand responsive services
- An expanded Fastrack, frequent and high-quality services and consideration of a 'Superbus' network
- Modern and comfortable buses and a move to zero-carbon vehicles
- Traffic management measures to speed up buses on the key radial routes
- Improvements to bus stops and the information shown at them
- Comprehensive bus and train information on a one-stop site
- Introduction of a bus passenger charter, with redress when things go wrong

Cross-boundary services

The extent of cross-boundary working with Kent's neighbouring authorities has been considered, particularly in terms of a potential joint EP Plan. The key neighbour is Medway, which is surrounded on three sides by Kent. As Medway has different priorities and urban geography to Kent, it is not proposed to undertake a joint plan. However, both authorities are working closely to minimise any cross-boundary issues that might arise and are looking at developing joint initiatives where suitable.

We will also liaise closely with East Sussex and Surrey councils and with Transport for London to ensure that cross boundary routes can continue to operate effectively.

Governance

The Enhanced Partnership Plan and schemes will be supported by a governance structure. This will cover:

- An executive board supplying strategic overview and carrying out the key decision-making process, including formal reviews of the contents of the schemes
- Monitoring groups in each of the three scheme areas, and reviewing progress of the local initiatives
- Network and bus punctuality improvement partnerships, concentrating on road network improvements and management
- Passenger charter groups in each scheme area monitoring progress of the charters and feeding back customer views
- Local focus groups in each district and borough, feeding the district views into the process and addressing issues previously covered by Quality Bus Partnerships.

Passenger charter

The EP will include a passenger charter developed initially by the targeted charter groups in each EP scheme area. These will set out the service that passengers can expect, the commitments made by both local authorities and bus operators and how any passenger issues will be addressed. Performance of services against the charter criteria will be monitored and complaints analysed to inform further actions in the EP Schemes.

8. ENGAGEMENT AND FUTURE REVIEW

This first version of the Kent Enhanced Partnership Plan is intended to cover a 5 year period from April 2022 until end of March 2027. The EP Board may propose variations to the Plan outside of the formal review dates, which if agreed will be subject to the statutory consultation process. Statutory consultees will be invited to sit on Kent's Enhanced Partnership scheme monitoring groups and as such have the opportunity to input into the success of the plan and inform any requirements for review or amendment.

In keeping with Kent's Bus Service Improvement Plan, this first version of the Kent EP Plan therefore remains aspirational assuming either receipt of the full NBS funding ask or that during this initial five-year period, there will be other opportunities to attract alternative funding or deliver initiatives in a different way or using the Council's own resources.

The process to review the EP Plan would commence at the start of the final year of the initial period (from April 2026) leading to adoption of a new plan and associated schemes from April 2027. Review of the Plan would be conducted using the established meeting and governance structure through EP Schemes Monitoring Groups making recommendations to the EP Board for approval. Targets will be reviewed through EP Schemes.

Changes to operational and financial circumstances will be reflected in updated versions of the Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan which will be subject to six monthly review and through the obligations and commitments made within our EP schemes which will be subject to a controlled but simple and responsive mechanism for variation.

PART 2 – EP SCHEME

THE EAST KENT ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP SCHEME FOR BUSES IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

Section 1 – EP Scheme Content

1.1 - This document fulfils the statutory requirements for an EP Scheme. In accordance with statutory requirements in section 138 of the Transport Act 2000, the EP Scheme document sets out:

Section 2 - Scope of the EP Scheme and commencement date

Section 3 - Obligations on the Local Authorities

Section 4 - Obligations on Bus Operators

Section 5 - Governance Arrangements

1.2 - The EP Scheme can only be put in place if an associated EP Plan has been made. Therefore, this document should be considered alongside the associated EP Plan.

1.3 - The EP Scheme has been jointly developed by Kent County Council (KCC), and those bus operators that provide local bus services in this EP Scheme area. It sets out commitments on both Local Authorities and operators of local services in order to achieve the intended improvements, with the aim of working towards the objectives of the associated EP Plan. The Lower Tier Authorities of Ashford Borough Council, Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council, Folkestone and Hythe District Council, Swale Borough Council and Thanet District Council were engaged in the development of Kent's BSIP, the principles of which form the basis of the EP Plan.

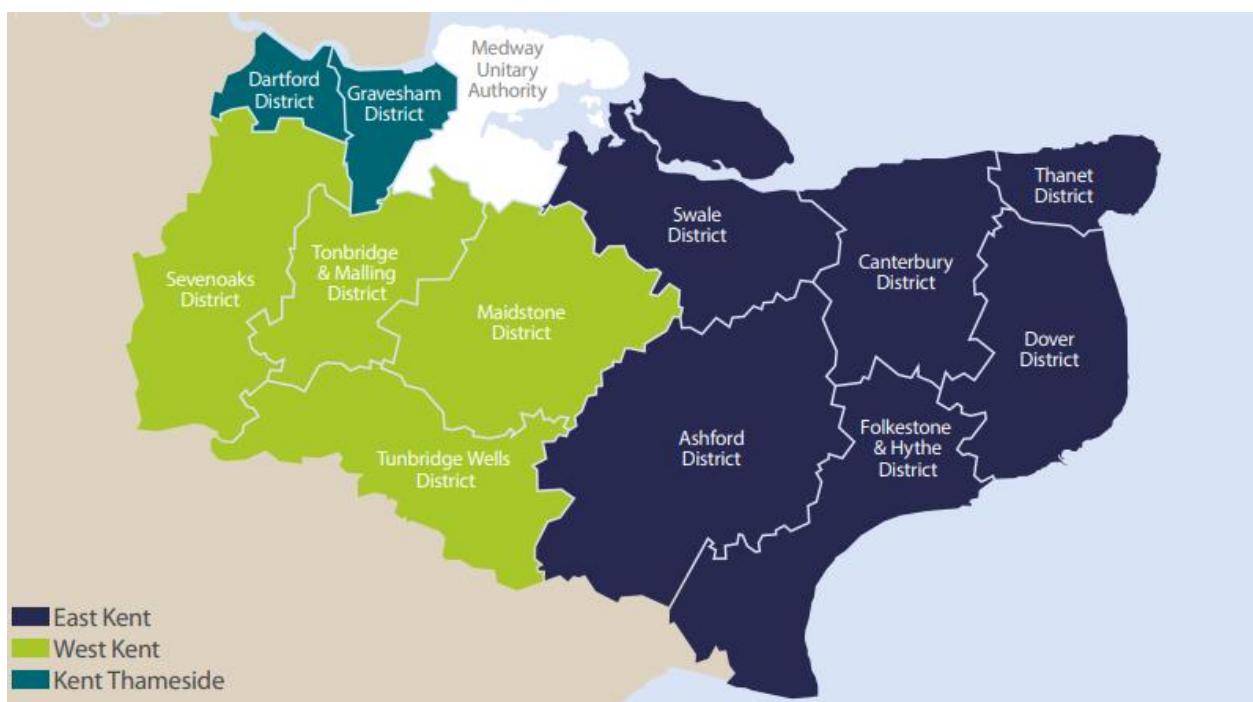
Section 2 - Scope of the EP Scheme and Commencement Date

Description of Geographical Coverage

2.1 - This EP Scheme will support the improvement of all local bus services operating in the following areas:

Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Swale and Thanet.

2.2 - Map of EP Plan and EP Scheme Areas



2.3 - Kent's EP Plan covers the whole of the area shown in the map (asides from Medway Unitary Authority which has formed its own EP).

2.4 – This East Kent EP Scheme covers the Boroughs / Districts shown in dark blue Two further schemes cover the West Kent and Kent Thameside areas.

Commencement Date

2.5 - The EP Plan and EP Scheme are made on 1st April 2022 The Plan will have no end date but will be reviewed every five years from the commencement date. The EP Board may propose variations to the Plan outside of the formal review dates, which if agreed will be subject to the statutory consultation process.

2.6 - The EP Scheme will have no specific end date but will be formally reviewed by the EP Board on an annual basis. Variations may be made to the EP Scheme outside of this formal review date as set out in section 5.

Exempted Services

2.7 - The following services are exempt from the requirements of the EP Scheme:

- Long distance or commuter services terminating in London.
- A service which is registered as a local service under section 6 of the Transport Act 1985 but which would otherwise be an excursion or tour within the meaning in section 137(1) of that Act is exempt.

-A service provided by operators using S19 or S22 permits

-Services operated by Transport for London (TfL)

--A service aimed primarily at the tourist or special event market utilising specialised vehicles – KCC will hold ultimate jurisdiction over which further services fall under this clause.

Section 3 - Obligations on the Authorities

3.1 - The following matrix sets out the specific interventions that authorities are required to deliver by subject area as part of the EP Scheme.

3.2 - All of the below obligations can be amended using the EP Scheme bespoke arrangements for varying or revoking the EP scheme as set out in Section 5.

3.3 - New obligations that relate to the principles and initiatives contained within the EP Plan are also subject to the bespoke arrangements for varying the EP scheme as set out in Section 5.

3.4 – KCC will seek to enter into Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with its Borough / District Councils in order to gain support against the measures and facilities identified under “supporting authorities” in the matrix below.

Key: Kent County Council (KCC), Ashford Borough Council (ABC) Canterbury City Council (CCC), Dover District Council (DDC), Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC), Swale Borough Council (SBC) and Thanet District Council (TDC)

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Responsibility	Local Transport Authority	Supporting Authorities	Facility (F) or Measure (M)	Delivery Date
To review the criteria for the support of council-funded socially necessary services to meet the aims of the National Bus Strategy and the post pandemic environment.	KCC		M	By March 2023

To develop Kent transport modelling and a prioritisation methodology to identify appropriate 22/23 service enhancements (NDI2 in BSIP) and assist with identifying further areas of focus for network studies (NBI3 in BSIP) should NBS funding allow.	KCC		M	By March 2023
--	-----	--	---	---------------

Utilising the above methodology, to work with operators to deliver resulting 22/23 service enhancements (NDI2) and subsequent network studies / related network improvements (NDI3) as funding from the NBS allows.	KCC		M	Commence once funding known
---	------------	--	----------	-----------------------------

To ensure that appropriate bus service provision is actively considered as part of new planning applications, including housing schemes.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	By March 2023
--	------------	---	----------	---------------

SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER CARE

Responsibility	Local Transport Authority	Supporting Authorities	Facility (F) or Measure (M)	Delivery Date
In conjunction with operators and passenger charter groups, develop and implement a single Kent passenger charter to cover all services within the EP and to ensure high operating and customer service standards.	KCC		M	By March 2023

To put passenger safety at the forefront of thinking with respect to operational / service management.	KCC		M	Ongoing
--	------------	--	----------	---------

FARES AND TICKETING

Responsibility	Local Transport Authority	Supporting Authorities	Facility (F) or Measure (M)	Delivery Date
KCC will help to identify and deliver specific fares and ticketing schemes, with a particular focus on initiatives which support recovery from the pandemic and access to tourism, employment opportunities and the support of Kent businesses.	KCC		M	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.

As funding allows, KCC will continue to assist bus operators to invest in their ETMs and back-office systems to enable the introduction of innovative ticketing offers, including a fully contactless fleet and fare capping	KCC		M	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.
--	------------	--	----------	--

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PRIORITY

Responsibility	Local Transport Authority	Supporting Authorities	Facility (F) or Measure (M)	Delivery Date
To introduce new bus stops and upgrade existing bus stops (including poles, flags, timetable cases, raised/ dropped kerbing, clearways) to support the network and passenger / operator requests as funding permits.	KCC		F	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.

When conducting civils work at bus stops to take the opportunity to bring them up to latest standards with respect to accessibility where practically possible.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	F	Ongoing.
---	------------	---	----------	----------

To work with Borough / District Councils to establish whether revised shelter contracts could be introduced across EP areas to improve standards and consistency of offering.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	March 2024 Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.
---	------------	---	----------	--

To seek to offer the annual Rural Shelter Grant to support the delivery of improved shelters in more rural areas as funding commits.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing.
--	------------	---	----------	----------

Within funding constraints, to work with Borough / District Councils to identify and deliver bus standing and driver facilities to support network growth.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	F	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.
To produce a bus stop hierarchy to enable the prioritisation and delivery of mobility hubs, bus – bus interchanges to enhance integration etc as NBS funding permits.	KCC		M	By March 2023
To press (where appropriate based on modelling) for the inclusion of bus priority measures as part of new developments or funded highway schemes	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing.
To refine the list of corridors where congestion has a high impact on bus reliability and work with operators to further prioritise focus areas, to allow delivery of feasibility studies and subsequent schemes as NBS funding permits.	KCC		M	By March 2023
To trial new technological solutions at bus stops where funding permits .	KCC		F	Ongoing.
Deliver already programmed infrastructure related to the Dover BRT Scheme	KCC	DDC	F	Ongoing

HIGHWAYS AND NETWORK MANAGEMENT

Responsibility	Local Transport Authority	Supporting Authorities	Facility (F) or Measure (M)	Delivery Date
Through KCC's new technical approvals process and the Kent Design Guide ensure that new and upgraded highway schemes fully consider buses with respect to access and design.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing.
For any new / upgraded highway schemes under KCC's control consider potential bus service improvements which would enhance reliability, service levels and accessibility and incorporate as funding permits. Ensure that these principles are encouraged (or enforced where applicable) for other non KCC schemes / developments.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing.
As funding permits seek to deliver highway interventions to aid bus punctuality coming out of PIPs, local transport focus groups or other sources.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	F	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.
Review, relaunch and lead new Punctuality Improvement Partnerships (PIP)	KCC		M	By March 2023
Through PIPs and local focus groups identify parking issues affecting buses and work with to introduce new restrictions and/ or enforce existing restrictions as funding & resource permits.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing.
Establish a roadworks taskforce – seeking to refine notification / communication processes. To support this work, KCC will secure and provide access for	KCC		M	By March 2023

operators and other stakeholders to a roadworks planning tool.				
--	--	--	--	--

Continue to support buses with respect to soft landscaping issues	KCC		M	Ongoing.
---	-----	--	---	----------

Work with Borough / District Councils to agree an approach to bus gate and bus lane ANPR enforcement, delivering solutions as funding permits.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing.
--	-----	---	---	----------

ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY MODELS

Responsibility	Local Transport Authority	Supporting Authorities	Facility (F) or Measure (M)	Delivery Date
To continue with delivery of a new Fastrack route in Dover	KCC	DDC	M	Ongoing.

KCC will establish a policy to ensure further opportunities for BRT and Superbus schemes are explored, including the creation of a housing development triggerpoint for larger scale developments.	KCC		M	By March 2024
--	-----	--	---	---------------

To ensure that park & ride, coach services, community transport services and DRT schemes are integrated with the conventional bus network, including in marketing and ticketing schemes.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing.
--	-----	---	---	----------

ENVIRONMENT AND AIR QUALITY

Responsibility	Local Transport Authority	Supporting Authorities	Facility (F) or Measure (M)	Delivery Date
Utilise DfT Zebra funding to deliver zero emission buses and charging infrastructure on Fastrack Dover.	KCC	DDC	M	Ongoing
Pursue any future funding opportunities to improve Kent's vehicle emission standards.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing.
Where funding permits deliver publicity campaigns to promote the role of the bus in meeting environmental challenges.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing.
Form an AQMA hierarchy in order to help to prioritise any future funding submissions linked to zero emission buses.	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	By March 2023
Set minimum emission standards for operation within EP scheme areas and negotiate with operators an appropriate programme for improving these standards.	KCC		M	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.

INNOVATION AND DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

Responsibility	Local Transport Authority	Supporting Authorities	Facility (F) or Measure (M)	Delivery Date
As funding permits KCC will support operators to help them secure enhanced ETMs, associated back-office functionality and TransXChange / Real Time Information capability. This will support a range of initiatives in respect of Real Time Information, ticketing and reliability	KCC		M	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.

As funding permits maximise the use of innovation in conjunction with operators – e.g. RTI, at stop audio announcements etc	KCC		F	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.
---	------------	--	----------	---

PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION

Responsibility	Local Transport Authority	Supporting Authorities	Facility (F) or Measure (M)	Delivery Date
Consider the development of the Kent Connected brand and its role as a Kent brand / its ability to deliver the “one stop shop” solution – see below.	KCC		M	By March 2023

Develop and deliver a “one stop shop” for Public Transport information including journey planning functionality, an interactive map and RTI.	KCC		F	By March 2023
--	------------	--	----------	---------------

Agree with operators to set standards for at-stop bus timetables and printed publicity.	KCC		M	Ongoing.
---	------------	--	----------	----------

Conduct publicity campaigns (subject to funding) to encourage higher usage of the bus post recovery and to support strategic priorities	KCC	ABC CCC DDC FHDC SBC TDC	M	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known.
---	------------	---	----------	---

Section 4 - Obligations on Local Bus Operators

4.1 - The below sets out the specific interventions that operators are required to deliver by subject area as part of this EP Scheme.

4.2 - All of the below obligations can be amended using the EP Scheme bespoke arrangements for varying the EP scheme as set out in Section 5.

4.3 - New obligations that relate to the principles and initiatives contained within the EP Plan are also subject to the bespoke arrangements for varying the EP scheme as set out in Section 5.

4.4 – Bus operators operating within the geographical area covered by this EP scheme will provide representation at every EPSMG meeting.

NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date
Operators	To work with KCC to identify and implement opportunities to improve local bus services in Kent, particularly to underserved communities and at times of day when service levels are poor	Ongoing
Operators	To work with KCC to develop a unified bus network, making best endeavours to co-ordinate timetables and introduce simple ticketing to enable interchanging between services.	Ongoing
Operators	To work with KCC, neighbouring local authorities, the rail industry and other service providers to seek opportunities to better develop and deliver coordinated services and facilities between bus, rail and other modes across the Scheme area where practically possible	Ongoing
Operators	To agree to work with KCC and neighbouring local authorities to work towards a set of common registration / timetable change dates per year (for the benefit of co-ordinated information etc), recognising the need for exemptions.	By March 2023
Operators	To work openly and transparently with KCC with respect to any planned service changes, ensuring that notification and discussion takes place ahead of the statutory registration window.	By March 2023

Operators	To work with KCC to deliver 22/23 NBS service enhancements (NDI2) and subsequent network studies and related network improvements (NDI3) as funding from the NBS allows.	Commence once funding known

SERVICE MANAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER CARE

Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date
Operators	In conjunction with KCC and passenger charter groups, develop and implement a single Kent passenger charter to cover all services within the EP and to ensure high operating and customer service standards through such measures as high-quality staff training.	By March 2023
Operators	Through high levels of operational management (e.g. vehicle contingency, network planning, scheduling, roadworks planning etc) work to deliver the highest possible levels of reliability and operational standards. These will be included in the Passenger Charter and EP targets.	Ongoing
Operators	To put passenger safety at the forefront of thinking with respect to operational / service management.	Ongoing
Operators	To raise any safety concerns regarding stopping arrangements in the county, including marked bus stops and hail and ride stopping practices with KCC.	Ongoing

FARES AND TICKETING

Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date
Operators	To work with KCC to deliver specific fares and ticketing schemes, with a particular focus on initiatives which support recovery from the pandemic and access to tourism, employment opportunities and the support of Kent businesses	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known
Operators	To improve the capability of ETMs whenever possible to support contactless bus ticketing and innovative new products	Ongoing.

Operators	To ensure that return tickets are accepted by all operators on common sections of route, subject to a separate ticketing agreement, and to work with KCC to improve ticket acceptance of period passes.	Return tickets – Summer 2022 Period tickets – subject to funding
------------------	---	---

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PRIORITY

Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date
Operators	Provide feedback to KCC on bus stop condition to allow for quick and efficient action to be taken.	Ongoing
Operators	To ensure that buses are using infrastructure appropriately (e.g. position of bus at raised kerb) to support accessible boarding.	Ongoing
Operators	If through agreement with KCC operators are delivering bus stop infrastructure directly (e.g. flags, cases), operators will work to conditions and standards agreed by KCC.	Ongoing
Operators	When laying over between journeys, ensure buses are parked up at appropriate positions which are communicated with KCC and Borough / District Councils.	Ongoing
Operators	Where new standing & or driver meal break / toilet facilities are provided, to propose reciprocal operational benefits where achievable	Ongoing.
Operators	To work with KCC to trial new technologies at bus stops where funding permits	Ongoing.
Operators	Work with KCC to refine the list of corridors where congestion has a high impact on bus reliability and through use of data consider reciprocal network benefits which could be offered up if improvements were delivered.	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known

HIGHWAY AND NETWORK MANAGEMENT

Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date
Operators	Where highway network changes are made that result in resource savings as a result of faster journey times operators will reinvest some of the benefit in more frequent services, new or newer buses, or other improvements of mutually agreed value in conjunction with local network reviews	Ongoing.
Operators	Engage fully with KCC when consulted on new road schemes and their operational impacts	Ongoing.
Operators	Send appropriate representation to PIPs, Roadworks Taskforce meetings etc and work constructively with KCC, including providing supporting data, to identify areas of concern and to deliver solutions within budget constraints.	Ongoing.
Operators	Report on soft landscaping issues affecting buses in a timely manner.	Ongoing.
Operators	Through use of roadworks planning tool, ensure roadworks diversions / stop suspensions are appropriately planned and communicated to passengers.	Ongoing.

ALTERNATIVE DELIVERY MODELS

Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date
Operators	To work to ensure that the Fastrack bus network and surrounding local bus networks are organised in a way to complement each other. Operators must take part in seamless ticketing products to enhance these links.	<i>Ongoing.</i>
Operators	To work with KCC to ensure that park & ride, coach services, community transport services and DRT schemes are integrated with the conventional bus network, including in marketing and ticketing schemes.	Ongoing.

ENVIRONMENT AND AIR QUALITY

Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date
Operators	Seek to continuously improve bus emission standards through new investment in fleets, as funding permits.	Ongoing.
Operators	Work with KCC and Borough / District Councils as appropriate to form bids to any future funding sources to support conversion to zero emission vehicles	Ongoing.
Operators	To commit to minimise idling when at bus stops and stands or in queuing traffic.	By March 2023.
Operators	To work with KCC on advertising campaigns to promote the role of the bus in meeting environmental challenges as funding permits.	Ongoing.

INNOVATION AND DIGITAL ACCESSIBILITY

Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date
Operators	Maximise the use of innovation in conjunction with KCC as funding permits or legislation requires – e.g. audio / visual on bus announcements, passenger occupancy tools etc.	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known
Operators	To improve the capability of ETMs whenever possible to provide contactless bus ticketing and innovative new products	Ongoing.
Operators	To ensure that live information feeds to BODS and other real time systems cover all local bus services	Ongoing.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFORMATION

Responsibility	Action	Delivery Date
Operators	Ensure that appropriate and up to date data feeds are being fed into KCC / BODS to meet legislation and support a one stop shop website	March 2022
Operators	To conduct publicity campaigns (subject to funding) in partnership with KCC to encourage higher use of the bus post recovery and to support key strategic priorities. This will incorporate any agreed brand.	Ongoing. Extent of obligation subject to change once NBS funding known
Operators	To ensure that publicity postings comply with minimum standards set within the EP	Ongoing.
Operators	To provide and support a website which includes clear, accurate and up to date information, including but not limited to, timetables, contact details and provide a link and promotion to the KCC “one stop shop” site	Ongoing.
Operators	To agree any numbering for new services with KCC to avoid passenger confusion or duplication.	Ongoing.

Section 5 – Governance Arrangements

5.1 An Enhanced Partnership Board (EPB) has been formed which has the role of overseeing such matters as the success and fitness for purpose, variation and revocation of the Enhanced Partnership Plan, Enhanced Partnership Schemes and downward governance structures, through formal voting and variation mechanisms.

Kent has three EP Schemes in place and as such an Enhanced Partnership Scheme Monitoring Group (EPSMG) will also be formed for each EP Scheme area.

The EPB will:

- Oversee the formation and content of the EP Plan, ensuring consistency with the Kent Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)
- Oversee the introduction and continuously monitor the progress of Kent’s EP Plan and three EP Schemes ensuring consistency across the county
- Form and agree terms of reference for each EPSMG and ensure they are delivering EP Scheme outcomes.
- Table and vote on measures, facilities and obligations for inclusion in the EP Schemes, which will subsequently be subject to formal variation.

- Consider proposals for variation from Kent's three EPSMGs for changes effecting the county as a whole (i.e., applicable to all EP Schemes)
- Consider reports and proposals for variation affecting individual EP Schemes, proposed by the relevant EPSMG.
- Review progress against BSIP Targets (see Annex B)
- Ensure that each party is fulfilling its obligations within the overall EP.

The EPSMGs will:

- Oversee the delivery of existing measures, facilities and obligations in the EP Schemes, with reference to the EP Board.
- Provide reports to the EPB on EP Scheme progress and performance against all targets.
- Give consideration to how well the EP Plan and EP Schemes are working and recommend any potential changes required to the EPB.
- Agree and promote items for potential EP Scheme variation to the EPB, which may be applicable to the EP as a whole or the relevant EP Scheme.
- Address feedback from the EP Scheme Passenger Charter Group, Punctuality Improvement Partnership (PIP) and Local Focus Group.

5.2 - The EPB will consist of a maximum of nine (9) persons representing voting Core Members, those persons being the below (or a substitute attendee nominated by the core member who has authority to vote):

1. The KCC Cabinet member
2. The KCC Director of Highways and Transportation
3. The KCC Head of Public Transport
4. The KCC Traffic Manager
5. Five (5) operator attendees. This will include an automatic invite to any operator operating over 25% of scheduled mileage in Kent. Any remaining operator positions will be subject to nomination by an operator agreed process with the aim of ensuring coverage of all EP Scheme areas and inclusive representation for all operator types – i.e., inclusive of group and smaller, independent operators.

5.3 – The following will be invited to all EPB meetings:

1. Transport Focus
2. Traffic Commissioner for the South-East and Metropolitan traffic area
3. A Borough / District representative nominated by each EPSMG.

Additional non-voting Members will be subject to invitation to the EPB dependent on the content of meetings (e.g. Medway Council, KALC, TfL etc) as agreed by EP Core Members.

5.4 - The EPB will meet at least every 6 months with meeting dates agreed in advance of the relevant financial year (April – March). Extraordinary meetings may be proposed by any EPB member. Voting Core Members should advise of attendance within 7 days of the scheduled meeting with 80% of attendees needing to be present for the meeting to proceed.

5.5 – It is expected that the EPB will predominantly meet virtually

5.6 – In the interest of transparency and to enable all stakeholders the ability to comment and inform the considerations of the board and their resulting decisions, meeting papers for the EPB will be circulated to all board members and scheme monitoring group members fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting date, with items subject to formal vote and potential variation clearly identified.

5.7 – The EPB will undertake to consider all comments received from any party referenced in 5.6, so long as comments are received no less than 5 days prior to the meeting date.

5.8 – Meeting notes (including action points and variations to be enacted) will be circulated within 14 days of the meeting date and published on the EP website. Meeting notes will be subject to KCC's normal FOI procedures.

5.9 – Meetings will be administered by KCC.

5.10 - Decisions of substance or with financial impacts on KCC will be subject to the KCC constitution and governance policies and processes, which may affect the timing items are brought to the EPB

Review of EP Scheme

5.11 - Once the EP Scheme is made, its progress and any potential variations will be reviewed by the EPB through its meetings - see 5.1. Any review will consider as a minimum the effectiveness of the measures taken, facilities provided, and requirements imposed on operators - particularly in relation to their impact on the objectives for improving services set in the EP plan and BSIP and, if relevant, on bus journey times, passenger satisfaction and growth of the market.

5.12 - Once the EP Scheme is made, it will be formally reviewed by the EP Board on an annual basis. Variations may be made to the EP Scheme outside of this formal review date as set out in section 5.13. Reviews will ensure any necessary action is taken to deliver the targets set out in the BSIP. Kent County Council will initiate each review.

Bespoke Arrangements for Varying the Enhanced Partnership Scheme

5.13 - Under powers at s.138E of the Transport Act 2000, Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations relating to commitments in sections 3, 4 and associated annexes

where section 5.13 is quoted, will be subject to the bespoke voting mechanism also set out in section 5.16.

5.14 – If changes to or new flexibility provisions under s.138E of the Transport Act 2000 are not in the existing EP Plan they must satisfy the statutory objection mechanism as set out in The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018

Proposer of a variation

5.15 - Consideration will be given to potential EP Scheme variations, highlighted by one of the organisations represented on the EPB, or proposed by a EPSMG. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the BSIP, EP Plan or current local transport policies. Such requests should be in writing and submitted to nbs@kent.gov.uk KCC will forward all requests onto all EPB members for information and arrange for an agenda item at the next available EPB meeting.

Decision-making process and bespoke variation mechanism

5.16 – Any material change affecting any EP scheme, including variations, will be subject to a vote by the Operator members at the EPB. If the proposed variation is agreed by the majority of bus operators, and if KCC are also in full agreement, the EP Scheme variation will be made within ten working days and the revised EP scheme will be published on the KCC website. If the agreed variation is not related to one of the elements of the EP scheme where the bespoke variation method is applicable (as detailed in section 5.13 and 5.14) they must satisfy the statutory objection mechanism as set out in The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018. All operator reps need to have voted either in person at the meeting or remotely in advance of the meeting. To avoid a tie, any operator abstaining from the vote will be deemed to have voted in favour of the decision.

Revocation of an EP Scheme

5.17 - If a member of the EPB believes it is necessary to revoke the EP Scheme, the EPB will be reconvened. If the decision is taken to revoke the EP Scheme, it will follow the full formal statutory process and not the bespoke arrangements.

5.18 - Any data required for the operation of the EP Scheme will be confidential between the parties, Data shall only be shared to the extent permitted by competition law and subject to any UK GDPR.

5.19 - Information provided to KCC under Section 143 of the Transport Act 2000 and associated secondary legislation will remain confidential, unless otherwise agreed or required by law.

ANNEX A - GLOSSARY AND DEFINITIONS

The following terms have been used in the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme documents in Kent:

ABODS/BODS – The Government’s Analyse Bus Open Data service brings together data from bus operator systems, including ticket machines, to collate and summarise bus reliability by individual services.

AQMA – Air Quality Management Areas are defined areas where action is being taken to reduce air pollution.

ANPR – Automatic number plate recognition cameras may be used for bus lane enforcement, see below.

Bespoke Variation – A means to vary the requirements of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme, described in Section 5, without invoking the full requirements of Section 138 of the Transport Act 2000.

BRT – Bus Rapid Transit systems offer high quality and frequent bus services on routes with a high level of bus priority measures which often include segregated bus lanes.

Bus Gate – A short stretch of road carriageway that is restricted to use by buses and (where specified) taxis and other authorised vehicles as indicated on appropriate signage on the approach.

Bus Lane – A signposted lane, designated for use by registered local bus services and (where specified) taxis and other authorised vehicles, at the times also indicated by signage.

Bus Lane Enforcement – action taken to ensure that bus lanes and bus gates are used only by authorised vehicles. This is often carried out by using cameras to record unauthorised use, with the issue of civil penalties to offenders under section 144 of the Transport Act 2000

Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) – A document published in June 2021 containing proposals to improve bus services, available to download at kent.gov.uk/busfuture

Bus Stand – A bus stop clearway which permits a local bus to stand within the carriageway for as long as may be necessary up to a period of 10 minutes.

DRT – Demand responsive transport schemes are flexible bus services using pre-booking via an app or telephone booking line.

Enhanced Partnerships – Formal partnerships between local authorities and bus operators created under the Bus Services Act 2017, designed to improve bus services by setting out firm commitments which are binding on both authorities and operators.

Enhanced Partnership Board – The committee of operators and the LTA responsible for managing the Enhanced Partnership, including decision making.

Enhanced Partnership Scheme Monitoring Group – The group formed of local authorities and all bus operators running in this EP Scheme area to oversee the

delivery of existing commitments and to promote potential variations to the Scheme to the EP Board.

Enhanced Partnership Plan – The document made pursuant to section 138A of the Transport Act 2000 and which is required to be in place for an EP Scheme to be made.

Enhanced Partnership Scheme Area – The area to which this EP Scheme document applies.

Facilities – physical assets that are provided at specific locations along particular routes (or parts of routes) within the EP scheme area or new and improved bus priority measures. This is deemed for such purposes of section 138D(1) of the Transport Act 2000.

Fare Capping – A multi-operator ticketing scheme which will cap a user's travel cost according to the lowest price available for the journeys made.

Fastrack – Kent's well established and successful BRT service.

LTA – Local Transport Authorities have responsibility for transport matters in their area. In the case of this EP Scheme, this means Kent County Council.

Local Focus Group – Each borough or district in Kent will have a local focus group, looking at their local bus services and how they can be improved. This group will replace Quality Bus Partnerships, where these exist.

MaaS – Mobility as a service platforms bring together a number of transport modes on one app, offering details of each service together with ticket booking facilities.

Measures – improvements with the aim of:

- Increasing the use of local bus service serving the routes to which the measures relate or ending or reducing a decline in their use; or
- Improving the quality of local bus service.

Memorandum of Understanding – In this case, an agreement between KCC and each borough or district council to work closely together on issues such as planning in relation to bus services, roadworks, bus stop infrastructure and bus priority measures.

Multi-Operator Ticketing – common fares and ticketing products applied and accepted by multiple operators.

National Bus Strategy – The national strategy for England as set out in the Government document "Bus Back Better"

Passenger Charter – A document setting out bus users' rights to defined standards of service including a mechanism for redress. The Passenger Charter will be a single Countywide document. Each EP Scheme will have its own Passenger Charter Group to monitor the performance of local bus services.

Passenger Charter Group – An independently hosted group consisting of a range of stakeholders and user groups formed to monitor fulfilment of the Passenger Charter in each EP Scheme area.

PIPs – Punctuality Improvement Partnerships are forums where bus operators and local authorities discuss locations where bus services are regularly delayed and seek to find solutions to reduce these delays.

Quality Bus Partnerships – Voluntary agreements between KCC, borough or district councils and bus operators in that district designed to work closely together to improve local bus services.

Real Time Information – Technology used to track the location of buses in real time. Information is transmitted to bus stops or devices to indicate to passengers the predicted arrival time at a particular point.

Rural Shelter Grant – A KCC scheme designed to assist in providing improved bus shelters in rural areas.

Soft Landscaping – Features such as trees and bushes that can obstruct the highway.

Superbus Network – A well promoted network of higher frequency, lower fare bus services, ideally in intermediate areas, such as a group of individual towns.

TransXChange – A common standard that ensures that timetable information can be exported by bus operators into service information portals.

UK GDPR: the retained EU law version of the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679).

Zebra Funding – A Government scheme designed to implement a comprehensive zero-emission bus network in a defined area.

Zero Emission Vehicle – A vehicle that emits no pollution from its tailpipe.

ANNEX B – TARGETS

This annex may be varied using the Bespoke variation method described in Section 5 of this EP Scheme.

Kent's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) included high level aspirational targets covering the following areas – Passenger numbers, journey time (bus speeds), reliability (service timekeeping), reliability (service actually operating), passenger satisfaction and vehicle emissions.

Once Kent's NBS allocation is known it is intended to include figures for the above targets within this scheme annex through variation.

ANNEX C – DETAIL ON MEASURES, FACILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS

This annex may be varied using the Bespoke variation method described in Section 5 of this EP Scheme.

When further detail has been agreed concerning the facilities, measures and obligations set out in sections 3 and 4 of this EP Scheme, this will be included as schedules within this annex.