

National Bus Strategy – Bus Back Better

Cheshire West and Chester Enhanced Partnership Scheme

April 2022

Transport and Highways



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1 Enhanced Partnership Definitions

In this Enhanced Partnership Scheme, the following terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them below:

Table 1.1: Enhanced Partnership Definitions

Term	Meaning
1985 Act	1985 Act Transport Act 1985
2000 Act	2000 Act Transport Act 2000
2017 Act	2017 Act Bus Services Act 2017
Bus Operators (or Operators)	All Large Operators and Small Operators running Qualifying Bus Services taken collectively.
Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)	The document first produced in October 2021 and reviewed annually, that sets out the Council's strategy for meeting the requirements of the National Bus Strategy and describes the measures that will be taken forward under an Enhanced Partnership.
Council	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Enhanced Partnership	The Enhanced Partnership covering the geographic extent of the administrative boundary of the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester shown for identification purposes only edged purple on the plan at Figure 2.1.
Enhanced Partnership Board	The committee of selected Bus Operator representatives, and Council representatives responsible for considering recommendations put forward by the EP Forum and making decisions including specific Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations using the mechanism in section 6.
Enhanced Partnership Forum	The committee of all Cheshire West and Chester Bus Operators, the Council, representatives of passenger

Term	Meaning
	groups, local businesses, the Local Enterprise Partnership and local authorities from neighbouring areas responsible for considering all issues affecting the Enhanced Partnership, and making recommendations in line with the Enhanced Partnership governance arrangements.
Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP)	The document that provides a high-level vision and objectives for bus services in the Enhanced Partnership area.
Enhanced Partnership Scheme/s (EPS)	The document/s that set out the precise detail of how the EP vision and objectives will be achieved, including any commitments made by the local authority or standards to be met by bus operators.
Enhanced Partnership Working Group	Group responsible for day-to-day operational decisions and discussion around the services that make up the Enhanced Partnership. The EP Working Group includes Cheshire West and Chester Council officers, representatives from all commercial bus operators within Cheshire West and Chester (Arriva, Stagecoach, D&G Buses, Warrington's Own Buses, Arrowbrook, and Aintree Coachline), and any other professional internal or external staffing support deemed necessary.
Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation	A formal variation of the relevant Enhanced Partnership Scheme as a result of the process set out in the corresponding Enhanced Partnership Scheme Document. This will then constitute a formal variation of the relevant scheme for the purposes of s.138E(1) of the 2000 Act.
Facilities	Those facilities referred to in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Document which shall be deemed such for the purposes of s.138D(1) of the 2000 Act.

Term	Meaning
Large or Small Operator	<p>Any single Bus Operator with registered mileage representing the following proportions of total registered mileage for Qualifying Bus Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large: equal to or greater than 10% • Small: less than 10%. <p>For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Large, and Small Operators will be published on the EP website at the start of each Council financial year.</p>
Measures	<p>Those measures referred to in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Document which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138D(2) of the 2000 Act.</p>
Non-qualifying Bus Service	<p>Services excluded from classification as Qualifying Bus Services.</p>
Qualifying Bus Service	<p>A registered local bus service with one or more stopping place within the geographical area of the Enhanced Partnership, with the exception of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any schools or works registered local bus service not eligible for Bus Service Operators Grant • Any cross-boundary registered local bus service with less than 10% of its registered mileage within the Enhanced Partnership area • Any services operated under section 22 of the 1985 Act • Any registered local bus service which is an excursion or tour • Any other registered local bus service that the Operators (through the Enhanced Partnership Forum voting mechanism discussed in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Document) and Council decide should be

Term	Meaning
	<p>excluded from all or specific requirements of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Qualifying Bus Services will be published at the start of each Council financial year.</p>
Requirements	<p>Those requirements placed upon Bus Operators identified as such within the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Document which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138C 2017 Act.</p>
Traffic Commissioner Powers	<p>‘Relevant registration functions’ of Traffic Commissioners to the extent that they relate to a ‘relevant service’ both within the meanings given to them under section 6G(10) of the 1985 Act.</p>

2 Enhanced Partnership Scheme Content

THE CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP SCHEME FOR BUSES IS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 138G(1) OF THE TRANSPORT ACT 2000 BY:

CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL

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 3 - Scope of the EP Scheme and commencement date

Section 4 - Obligations on the Local Authorities

Section 5 - Obligations on Bus Operators

Section 6 – Governance Arrangements

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.

The EP Scheme has been jointly developed by Cheshire West and Chester Council and those bus operators that provide local bus services in the EP Scheme area. It sets out obligations and requirements on both the Local Transport Authority, Local Highway Authorities and operators of local services in order to achieve the intended improvements, with the aim of delivering the objectives of the associated BSIP and EP Plan.

The EP Scheme aims to contribute towards meeting the 8 objectives set out in the EP Plan. These are:

1. Mitigating against Climate Change:

Reduce carbon emissions from transport by adapting our transport networks to take advantage of low carbon and renewable resources to mitigate the effects of climate change

2. Enhancing Connectivity within Cheshire West:

Enhance transport connectivity within Cheshire West between urban and rural areas and across local, regional and national borders

3. Promoting Equality of Opportunity:

Work to increase equality of opportunity within Cheshire West and surrounding areas by installing minimum standards of transport accessibility for all areas, regardless of individual circumstance

4. Supporting Growth and Regeneration:

Support sustainable economic growth and regeneration within Cheshire West and surrounding areas by improving connectivity between key growth sites and accessibility to jobs and services

5. Raise Quality of Life within Cheshire West and surrounding areas:

Ensure that transport helps to improve quality of life and enhances the local environment within Cheshire West and surrounding areas

6. Ensure that the Transport Network is Reliable and Efficient:

Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks, that are integrated, accessible and inclusive, customer focused, sustainable and resilient

7. Improve the safety and health benefits of the transport network:

Contribute to safer and more secure transport in Cheshire West and surrounding areas and promote types of transport which are beneficial to health

8. Enhance the accessibility of the sustainable transport network:

Create a highly accessible sustainable transport network in Cheshire West and surrounding areas that offers an attractive and viable alternative to the private car throughout the day.

This Enhanced Partnership Scheme document sets out how the BSIP/EPP vision and objectives are to be achieved, and includes the scope of the EP Scheme and its commencement date, the obligations on CW&CC as the Local Transport Authority, the obligations on the bus operators which operate within CW&C, the Governance Structure and Bespoke Variation Arrangements, and the specific interventions which will deliver the EP Plan.

Improvements to the bus network in Cheshire West and Chester to achieve the objectives of the EPP will be delivered through 11 packages which will address the delivery themes specified in the National Bus Strategy.

The 11 packages, with a summary of the measures included in each package, are shown in the table below. Delivery of these outcomes will be contingent upon receipt of sufficient funding from various sources including Central Government.

Table 2.1: Enhanced Partnership Scheme Packages and Outcomes

Package	Outcome Summary
1: Service Frequency – Phase A Covid Recovery Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue support fund to maintain network • Timetable change co-ordination • Improved timetable / frequency co-ordination
2: Service Frequency – Phase B Growth Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local service frequency enhancements • Inter-urban frequency enhancements • Rural frequency enhancements
3: Bus Priority Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTMC interventions • Chester area highway interventions • Towns and rural areas

Package	Outcome Summary
4: DRT, Socially Necessary/Supported Service Standard Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of targeted trials of pre-booked flexible route bus services • Supported services review • Supported services minimum standards • Community enhancing routes • Collaboration with healthcare and third sector providers
5: Modal Integration Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park & Ride investment • Station link service improvements • PlusBus improvements • Timetable and information at rail stations • Timing interventions to improve connectivity • Chester City Gateway integration
6: Service Branding, Co-ordination, Information and Simplification Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information improvements • Route numbering simplification • Network branding
7: Passenger Infrastructure Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real time information rollout • Bus stop infrastructure improvements
8: Fares and Ticketing Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-operator ticketing • Simpler ticketing • Lower fares • Integrating ticketing across modes and geographies
9: Vehicle package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero emissions vehicles rollout • Vehicle emissions minimum standards • Other vehicle minimum standards
10: Policy Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking policy integration • Local Plan / planning / development planning integration

Package	Outcome Summary
11: Safety, Education, Promotion and Resource Package	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery resource safeguarding • Safety interventions • Sustainable travel promotion

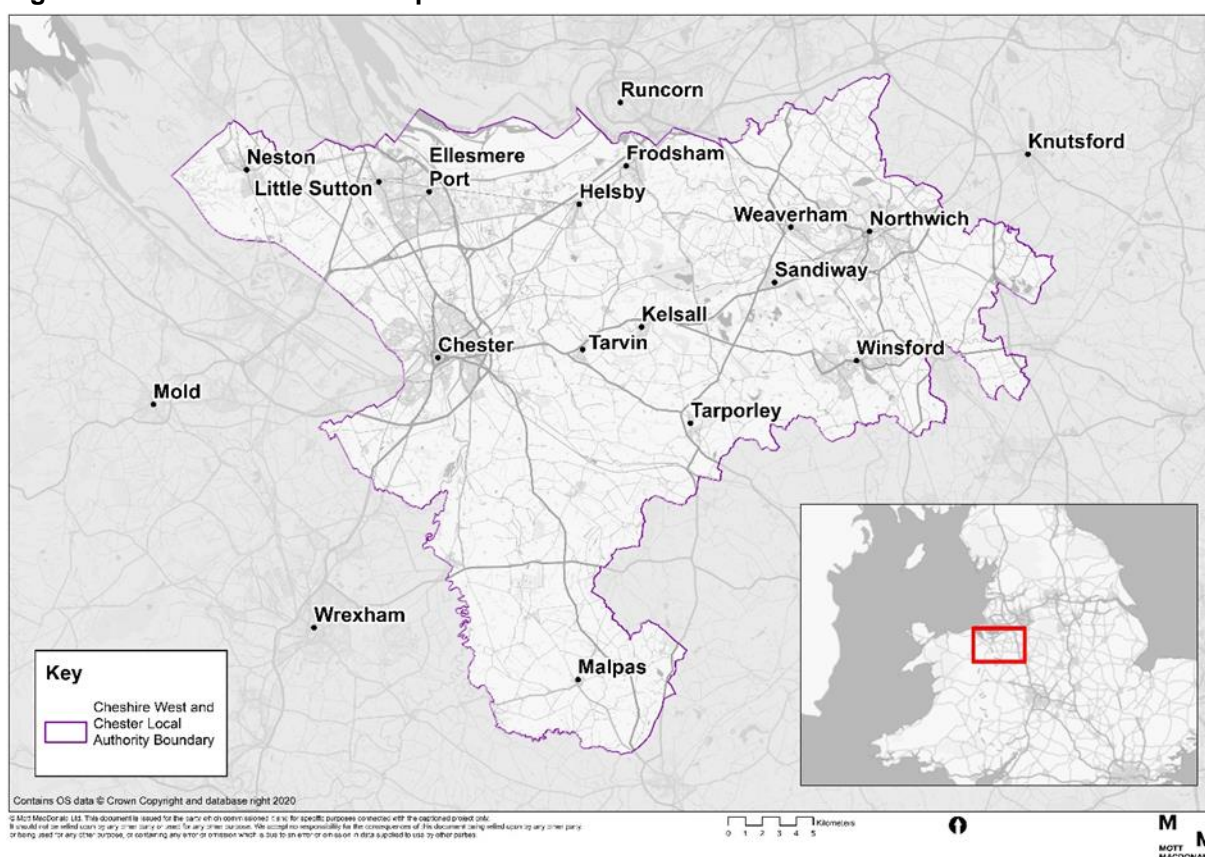
This EPS document contains details on the 11 packages which were included within the BSIP and these will form the primary means of delivery of improvements to the bus network in Cheshire West and Chester.

3 Scope of the EP Scheme and Commencement Date

3.1 Description of Geographical Coverage

The Enhanced Partnership Scheme (EPS) covers the geography of the unitary authority of Cheshire West and Chester, as shown in Figure 3.1

Figure 3.1: Enhanced Partnership area



The Cheshire West and Chester geography covers a diverse area, with a number of urban centres along with a largely rural area in the central and southern parts of the borough.

The Enhanced Partnership Scheme covers the entirety of the geography covered by the Enhanced Partnership Plan for Cheshire West and Chester, contained within a separate document.

3.2 Commencement Date

The Enhanced Partnership Scheme (EPS) contained in this document is produced in combination with the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EPP) contained within a separate document. This is driven by the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) first produced in October 2021 and updated annually. The BSIP presents CW&C's proposed strategy to meet the requirements of the National Bus Strategy for England (Bus Back Better).

The EP Plan and EP Scheme are made on 20 April 2022.

The EP Scheme will have no specific end date but will be reviewed by Cheshire West and Chester Council every six months.

3.3 Exempted Services

The list of bus services that currently operate within Cheshire West and Chester is appended to this document in Appendix A. The following services are exempt from the requirements of this EP Scheme:

- A service which has part or all of its route registered as a local service in the EP geographical area, but where that part of its route is 10% or less of the overall route distance covered by the service from its service start to service end point.
- 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 from the headway requirements in section 4 of this agreement.
- Any Community Transport or other service not registered as a public bus service with the Traffic Commissioner.

Examples of exempted services include:

- All scheduled intercity bus or coach services such as:
 - National Express coach services 423 and 551 between Chester and London

- The Flixbus 021 coach service between Liverpool and London and
 - The Megabus M45 coach service between Seacombe and London.
- All sightseeing tour buses operating in the area including the Stagecoach Chester City Sightseeing Tour (service 100)
- D&G Service 42 between Crewe and Congleton which serves only a small part of the borough
- D&G Service 70 between Nantwich and Tiverton which also serves only a small part of the borough and
- Any community or other socially provided transport services that are not registered with the Traffic Commissioner as public bus services.

4 Obligations on the Authority

4.1 Memorialisation of the Blacon Pointer Voluntary Quality Partnership

Under the Enhanced Partnership, Cheshire West and Chester Council proposes to memorialise and propagate the existing voluntary agreement signed between the Council, Arriva, and Stagecoach (with additional Sunday services operated under contract by another operator) in respect of the Blacon Pointer (1/1A/15/15A services). In particular, the following obligations relate to Cheshire West and Chester Council:

- Name – Unless a suitable alternative name and brand is otherwise agreed by the operators of the service and Cheshire West and Chester Council officers, the ‘Blacon Pointer’ name and brand will be retained to refer to the services that previously formed the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between 2010 and 2022.
- Passenger Information – All bus shelters on Blacon Pointer former Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) routes are owned and maintained either by the Council or a third party operating on behalf of the Council. Service information is provided by the Council at these shelters, and this will continue to be the case. Timetables are additionally to be provided at bus stop sites without shelters. Requirements for other printed publicity material such as timetable leaflets will be agreed by the partners. To provide stability for customers and to minimise the costs to each partner, service changes will be restricted to four per year on dates to be agreed, in accordance with the Service Stability Code of Conduct.
- Marketing and Promotion – Bus Shelters sited on the route within the former VPA area will feature publicity material based on the Blacon Pointer branding and bus stop flags will be branded as required. Costs associated with branding are to be shared amongst partners on a basis to be agreed between partners before such costs are incurred. Failure to agree the

sharing proportions of such costs in advance shall result (unless the partners agree otherwise) in the partner responsible for such costs being responsible for it.

- Infrastructure – the Council will continue to provide and maintain bus shelters and stops used by the Blacon Pointer former VPA services. When improving infrastructure, the Council will consider footpath access to stops and shelters.

All other relevant components of the former VPA are also memorialised in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme.

4.2 Facilities

Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to provide the following Facilities subject to the availability of funding. The prioritisation of development and implementation of these facilities will be progressed according to the future direction of the EP Forum and Board and in response to available national and local funding. As funding permits, and through use of the Bespoke Variation Mechanism, specific Enhanced Partnership commitments will be formally recorded and adopted here as part of this Scheme.

4.2.1 Chester UTMC System

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to develop and implement:

- An ongoing programme of UTMC upgrades to the existing SCOOT system in Chester to allow real time bus detection and traffic signal priority (hurry up calls), via linkage with operators in vehicle ticket machines.

4.2.2 UTC in Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to install:

- SCOOT UTC traffic signal control systems in the towns of Ellesmere Port, Winsford and Northwich to allow real time traffic signal optimisation and UTMC bus detection.

4.2.3 Chester Area Highway Interventions

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, and utilising available local developer contributions, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to develop and implement a programme of radial corridor improvements in Chester for selected corridors, which will tackle delay points with targeted link and junction works. These corridors may include:

- All A road corridors that feed into the City centre and major junctions (controlled) that will adversely affect the journey times of passenger transport vehicles
- Review of the other signal controlled junctions to ensure that bus priority measures are implemented where they will deliver journey time reliability improvements
- Any other locations that will be identified as a consequence of ongoing discussions with operators and intelligence already held.

These works will be undertaken in full consideration of the need to provide improved accessibility for people of limited mobility to bus services.

4.2.4 Towns and Rural Areas Highway Interventions

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, and utilising available local developer contributions, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to develop and implement a programme of small improvement works in other towns and rural areas around the borough to tackle known congestion and delay points, such as extending waiting restrictions and management of on-street parking problems.

Works in the other towns and rural areas will be determined in conjunction with our operators. Workshops will be arranged to collect intelligence and to agree a prioritisation mechanism that will consider the views of all, ensuring that

maximum value is gained for minimum cost. It will be crucial to develop these improvements in collaboration with neighbouring authorities in locations which border other LTA areas.

These works will be undertaken in full consideration of the need to provide improved accessibility for people of limited mobility to bus services.

4.2.5 Park and Ride Investment

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, and utilising available local developer contributions, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to develop and implement a programme of improvements to the current Chester P&R provision across 4 sites to better publicise its offer and improve the current experience with modernised facilities. These works may include:

- New and upgraded surfacing
- New footways, kerbing and walking routes
- New streetlighting and CCTV
- Landscaping and new tree planting
- Enhanced bus stops, shelters, seating and information
- Improved cycle parking.

These works will be undertaken in full consideration of the need to provide improved accessibility for people of limited mobility to Park and Ride services.

4.2.6 City Rail Link Service

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council will support the current bus operator to undertake improvements to the shuttle service between Chester rail station, Chester Bus Interchange and city centre to better integrate rail passengers and more directly facilitate engagement of rail passengers with the local bus network for connecting travel. In particular, these could include:

- Improvements to vehicle quality
- Improvements to vehicle frequency
- Branding, signage and legibility improvements

- Incorporation into the PlusBus scheme and
- Potential ultimate restoration of the ‘free at the point of use’ nature of the service

4.2.7 Real-Time Information

Subject to sufficient funding being made available and utilising available local developer contributions, Cheshire West and Chester Council will aim to provide Real Time Information at all high footfall bus nodes across the borough. These may include (in addition to existing facilities):

- Chester Zoo
- Countess of Chester Hospital
- Cheshire Oaks
- Winsford Town Centre
- Winsford Railway Station
- Pepper Street (Chester)
- Northwich Railway Station
- Ellesmere Port town centre and
- Neston Town Centre.

4.2.8 Bus Stop Infrastructure

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to improve key bus stop and passenger waiting areas across the borough including:

- Foregate Street (the busiest on-street bus stops in Chester)
- Countess of Chester Hospital
- Northwich town centre’s main bus hub (Watling Street)
- Primary stops in Winsford (High Street), Neston (Brook Street) and Ellesmere Port (Civic Way).

These measures will include improvements to streetlighting and the provision of CCTV where appropriate, and will incorporate all relevant guidelines on ‘Safety

in Design'. They will also be undertaken in full consideration of the need to provide improved accessibility for people of limited mobility to bus services

4.2.9 Zero Emissions Vehicle Supporting Infrastructure

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to provide supporting EV infrastructure at locations across the borough including:

- Chester and Ellesmere Port Bus Stations and
- Chester Park and Ride sites.

4.2.10 Supported Services Vehicles

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council proposes to develop and enforce a minimum standard specification for bus vehicles on both commercial and supported routes to improve the passenger offer, and support environmental targets. These standards will include:

- Euro VI as a minimum vehicle emissions standard with a phased timeline towards a full zero emissions fleet
- RTI tracking to be made available on all supported service vehicles
- Contactless payment capability on all supported service vehicles
- Wifi and USB charging on all supported service vehicles
- Stop audio-announcement (if possible - subject to availability of national system provision elements).

4.2.11 Any Other Facilities that could meet the stated objectives of the EP Plan

The above list of facilities is not exhaustive and there may well be other facilities that the Council will be responsible for providing to meet the stated objectives of the EP Plan, identified as the EP progresses. These will be added to the Scheme as and when required using the Bespoke Variation Mechanism described in Section 6 of this document.

4.3 Measures

Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to provide the following Measures subject to availability of funding. The prioritisation of development and implementation of these measures will be progressed according to the future direction of the EP Forum and Board and in response to available national and local funding. As funding permits, and through use of the Bespoke Variation Mechanism, specific Enhanced Partnership commitments will be formally recorded and adopted here as part of this Scheme.

4.3.1 Revenue Support Fund

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to:

- Create and manage a fund for targeted use to ensure that commercial bus services continue to operate at a frequency and scale that allow passenger levels to recover to pre-pandemic levels. This fund is expected to be disseminated to bus operators on a route-by-route basis depending on mileage, number of total passengers, and recovery progress towards 2019 levels.
- Create and manage a fund for targeted use to facilitate service enhancements that will offer more frequent local, interurban and rural daytime services, and also additional evening and weekend services. In particular, the following corridors could be targeted for improvement:
 - Daytime improvements on Boughton Road, Vicars Cross Road, Hoole Road, Blacon / Saughall, Upton and Neston / Hooton / Ellesmere Port corridors
 - Further evening and weekend improvements to key routes throughout the Borough.
 - Interurban service strengthening on key corridors within the Borough – for example: Chester to Ellesmere Port / Frodsham / Runcorn, Christleton / Waverton / Tattenhall, Tarporley and mid Cheshire routes between Northwich, Winsford and Crewe/Sandbach

- Rural service strengthening on the Christleton / Waverton / Tattenhall corridor, Northwich to Frodsham, Utkinton/Tiverton to Tarporley and the Neston / Hooton / Ellesmere Port corridor.

4.3.2 Pre-booked Transport, Community Enhancing Routes and Integration with Other Sectors

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, including local developer contributions, and in line with the emerging results from the forthcoming Rural Mobility Fund trial, Cheshire West and Chester Council proposes to assess the feasibility of pre-booked flexible bus services to meet transport needs of communities, complementing fixed route scheduled bus services. The Cheshire West and Chester Council trial of this type of service in the Frodsham, Helsby and surrounding rural areas (funded by the Department for Transport Rural Mobility Fund) is expected to provide important feedback and experience of the opportunities and issues of this type of service to improve connectivity, increase social inclusion & active lifestyles and encourage use of environmentally sustainable travel choices.

This work will also include scope for integration with specialist community transport services to promote inclusion whilst also continuing to meet peoples' additional needs as well as opportunities to co-ordinate transport provision with the public health sector and access to health care. In line with this, Community Enhancing routes will be considered to the Countess of Chester Hospital and other primary medical facilities in Cheshire West and Chester.

All measures provided in relation to this will comply with minimum standards on accessibility for people with recognised protected characteristics.

4.3.3 Existing Bus Lane Enforcement

Cheshire West and Chester Council will develop with bus operators an evidence-based assessment process to determine the initial need and continued operational business case of any bus lane enforcement system used under this EP Scheme.

The agreed assessment arrangements will be adopted into the EP Scheme using the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at Section 6.

4.3.4 Managing Roadworks in the EP Scheme Area

Cheshire West and Chester Council will establish, within 6 months of Scheme adoption, with local bus operators, a mechanism to minimise disruption to local bus services from both planned and emergency roadworks. This will include liaison with bus operators to ensure that the co-ordination of works across the network minimises disruption, as well as setting out their processes and procedures for the provision and management of street works permits in the EP Scheme area.

Any procedure agreed with bus operators will be included within later version of the Scheme using the Enhanced Partnership Scheme Bespoke Variation arrangements at Section 6.

4.3.5 Supported Services Review

Cheshire West and Chester Council will undertake a full review of local supported services in the context of the Enhanced Partnership to re-assess what minimum service frequencies should apply to relevant routes, and to take opportunities to sustainably develop the commercial network and routes to avoid "cliff-edge" viability of commercial services and simpler mechanisms for public sector funding support. Subject to available funding, Cheshire West and Chester undertakes to follow the recommendations of the review to secure provision that offers stable connectivity to communities that develops long term confidence to allow people to access opportunity, community and services.

4.3.6 PlusBus Improvements

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council will support the development of the existing PlusBus offer to facilitate easier integration of bus and rail. Improvements targeted include: supporting national level development and promotion of the scheme into modern e-

ticketing methods and supporting local development and promotion of the scheme; ensuring that local bus services that serve a major railway station, including supported services and specialist services such as City Rail Link, are within the scheme.

4.3.7 Timetables and Bus Information at Rail Stations

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council will implement an ongoing programme of providing up to date bus timetable information at all rail stations within the borough, to be made available at the stations themselves and online.

All improvements made in relation to this will comply with minimum standards on accessibility for people with recognised protected characteristics.

4.3.8 General Bus Information

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council will develop and host a central information resource for the Enhanced Partnership to develop online and on-network information that is authoritative, cohesive, easily accessible, understandable and up to date, with, as a minimum, timetables and fares for all non-fare stage products available online.

All information provided within this central resource will comply with minimum standards on accessibility for people with recognised protected characteristics.

4.3.9 Network Branding

Subject to sufficient funding being available, and in partnership with Bus Operators, Cheshire West and Chester will develop a new highly recognisable network-wide CW&C bus branding, which can co-exist with neighbouring authorities' branding for cross-boundary services. This branding will be applied at bus stops, and on all information both online and physical.

4.3.10 Fares and Ticketing

Subject to sufficient funding being made available and subject to the availability of a suitable back-office system to support its development, Cheshire West and

Chester Council will work with operators to establish and administer a local smart ticketing scheme to provide:

- Fully contactless multi-operator ticketing system to be made available on all bus services (commercial and contracted) within the borough.
- A daily fare capping model to be introduced as part of this system
- A universal youth fare cap for all fare-paying passengers under 19s with an ultimate aspiration for a further tier of similarly discounted travel for under 25s.
- Multi-modal compatibility with national and regional ticketing offers for non-bus modes.

4.3.11 Local Parking Policy

Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to review local parking policy in Council owned car parks to support commitments to tackling climate change, with modal shift and carbon reduction targets. Furthermore, the Council will undertake to refresh local planning policy and associated SPDs to align with BSIP ambitions and enable developer contributions to support local bus infrastructure.

4.3.12 Delivery Resource

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council will take on an additional two FTE staff (above December 2021 levels) to co-ordinate, manage, and oversee delivery of the full range of packages of intervention and actions on behalf of the partnership. These staff will also provide educational resource and travel training support for young people, and will facilitate a more general, wider marketing of the improved bus offer.

4.3.13 Safety Interventions

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester will direct resource towards implementing minimum standard driver training schemes across all operations with regard to a range of areas such as counter terrorism, disability, customer conflict and modern day slavery. In addition the

Council will work to re-establish education teams to work with school children to develop bus safety awareness and establish long-lasting behavioural change, alongside of sustainable travel promotion. Finally, the Council will work to re-establish travel-training schemes for vulnerable people or people with disabilities to ensure awareness and knowledge of the local bus network and to maximise useability.

To identify and refine the contents of this package of measures, Cheshire West and Chester Council will consult further with Cheshire Constabulary and with the Community Safety Partnership to ensure that key priorities including night-time economy and prevention of violence and intimidation against women and girls have been fully considered and represented.

4.3.14 Any Other Measures that could meet the stated objectives of the EP Plan

The above list of measures is not exhaustive and there may well be other measures that the Council will be responsible for providing to meet the stated objectives of the EP Plan, identified as the EP progresses. These will be added to the Scheme as and when required using the Bespoke Variation Mechanism described in Section 6 of this document.

5 Obligations on Local Bus Operators

Under the Enhanced Partnership, and subject to sufficient available funding, all bus operators that operate qualifying services in Cheshire West and Chester will have the following obligations. The prioritisation of development and implementation of these facilities and measures will be progressed according to the future direction of the EP Forum and Board and in response to available national and local funding. As funding permits, and through use of the Bespoke Variation Mechanism, specific Enhanced Partnership commitments will be formally recorded and adopted here as part of this Scheme

5.1 Memorialisation of the Blacon Pointer Voluntary Quality Partnership

Under the Enhanced Partnership, Cheshire West and Chester Council proposes to memorialise and propagate the existing voluntary agreement signed between the Council, Arriva, and Stagecoach (with additional Sunday services operated under contract by another operator) in respect of the Blacon Pointer (1/1A/15/15A services). In particular, the following obligations relate to named bus operators:

- Name – Unless a suitable alternative name and brand is otherwise agreed by the operators of the service, the ‘Blacon Pointer’ name and brand will be retained to refer to the services that previously formed the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between 2010 and 2022.
- Bus Services – The bus services which form the basis for the Blacon Pointer former VPA are:
 - Chester – Rhuddlan Road – Blacon Parade – Chester Circular
 - Chester – Blacon Parade – Rhuddlan Road - Chester Circular
 - Chester – Blacon – Church Road - Saughall
 - Chester – Blacon – The Ridings - Saughall

These will be jointly operated by Arriva and Stagecoach with some Sunday services provided by another operator under contract as per the former VPA.

The operators shall, so as to provide continuity of the services in accordance with the joint service registrations, in the case of emergency affecting the other, use all reasonable endeavours to provide cover for the services that would have been run by the other absent the emergency.

- Marketing and Branding – the generic and marketing name for the former VPA services is currently ‘Blacon Pointer’. Unless an alternative name and brand is agreed by operators and CW&CC, in which case this alternative branding would be applied in its place, this branding will be applied to vehicles from Arriva, Stagecoach and any other operator of contracted services, operating the Blacon Pointer services. Exact positions for branding will be agreed with each operator depending on vehicle design. Any printed publicity material produced jointly or individually by the partners relevant to the former VPA will be suitably branded. Costs associated with branding are to be shared amongst partners on a basis to be agreed between partners before such costs are incurred. Failure to agree the sharing proportions of such costs in advance shall result (unless the partners agree otherwise) in the partner responsible for such costs being responsible for it.
- Bus Service Frequencies – Bus services will operate daily at frequencies and times listed in service registration documentation supplied by Arriva and Stagecoach (and any other operator under contract to CW&CC providing some Sunday services) to the Traffic Commissioner. A joint service is to be operated in accordance with the Transport Act 1985 and Transport Act 2008 (VQP) and applicable statutory instruments relating thereto (in each case as subsequently amended). Subject to sufficient funding availability and/or the recovery of patronage on the route following the COVID-19 pandemic, the initial minimum frequencies at which the service is to operate are as follows:
 - **Services 1, 1A**
 - Mondays to Saturdays (excluding public holidays): 0700–1900
- A daytime frequency of not less than every 15 minutes in each direction should be provided unless otherwise agreed by the Local Authority”

- Mondays to Sundays (including public holidays): 1900-2300 - An evening frequency of not less than 60 minutes in each direction should be provided unless otherwise agreed by the Local Authority
- Sundays and Public Holidays: 1000-1900 - A daytime frequency of not less than 30 minutes in each direction should be provided unless otherwise agreed by the Local Authority
- **Services 15, 15A**
 - Mondays to Saturdays: 0700-1900 - A daytime frequency of not less than 30 minutes in each direction should be provided unless otherwise agreed by the Local Authority

Proposals to change frequencies will be discussed between the Partners. If deemed significant enough to warrant a potential variation to the EP Scheme, will be passed in the usual manner to the EP Forum and Board and varied through the Bespoke Variation Mechanism described in section 6 of this document.

- Ticketing and Fares – Until and unless a wider multi-operator ticketing scheme is made available across the EP area, Arriva and Stagecoach agree to accept each other's tickets on the services noted above within the former VPA area. D&G Buses agrees to accept tickets sold by Arriva or Stagecoach on the services noted above within the former VPA area. This includes all ticket types that are available to the passenger and sold by either Arriva or Stagecoach. All fares and tariffs are set at the discretion of the individual operator and all fares collected will be retained by the individual operator.
- Vehicle Specification – Vehicles used on the Blacon Pointer former VPA will be a mix of buses and, subject to vehicle availability and suitable funding being made available to facilitate refit works, operators will work towards a minimum standard of Euro VI. All vehicles will comply with all Equality Act 2010 requirements related to accessibility including low floor and route number/destination displays. All vehicles must be cleaned on a daily basis, internally and externally, prior to commencing the service. In the event of

adverse weather conditions the requirement for external cleaning will be waived when this poses a health and safety risk.

All other relevant components of the former VPA are also memorialised in the Enhanced Partnership Scheme.

5.2 Service Frequencies

Subject to sufficient funding being made available to support this, bus operators will maintain services and frequencies at December 2021 levels for a period of at least one year (April 2022 – March 2023) to provide a stable platform upon which patronage levels may be facilitated to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

Following this, between April 2023 and March 2025, and subject to sufficient funding being made available to support this, bus operators will increase frequencies and hours of operation on key routes. The following improvements provide an example of the services that could be strengthened:

- Daytime improvements on Boughton Road, Vicars Cross Road, Hoole Road, Blacon / Saughall, Upton and Neston / Hooton / Ellesmere Port corridors
- Further evening and weekend improvements to key routes throughout the Borough.
- Interurban service strengthening on key corridors within the Borough – for example: Chester to Ellesmere Port / Frodsham / Runcorn, Christleton / Waverton / Tattenhall, Tarporley and mid Cheshire routes between Northwich, Winsford and Crewe/Sandbach
- Rural service strengthening on the Christleton / Waverton / Tattenhall corridor, Northwich to Frodsham, Utkinton/Tiverton to Tarporley and the Neston / Hooton / Ellesmere Port corridor.

These improvements will be undertaken in full consideration of the need to provide improved accessibility for people of limited mobility to bus services.

5.3 Timetable Changes and Co-Ordination

Timetable changes for qualifying services operating within Cheshire West and Chester will be made no more than 4 times per year and on dates agreed by the EP Bus Forum and Board. These are to be in line with agreed timetable change dates in both Liverpool City Region and North Wales and, for the next financial year, are to be:

- 24 April 2022
- 24 July 2022
- 04 September 2022
- 22 January 2023

Each year, Cheshire West and Chester Council shall inform operators of the exact dates on which changes are permitted ('Service Change Dates') by no later than 31 January, for the following April to March period. Additional timetable changes shall be permitted over the Christmas period, and CW&CC shall inform operators of the period over which such changes can be made ('Christmas Service Change Period') by no later than 31 January each year.

Where a Qualifying Bus Service also operates outside the EP Scheme Area, such that it is subject to an EP Scheme and/or a Franchising Scheme (as the case may be) in one or more areas covered by other LTAs, CW&CC shall seek to agree corresponding service change arrangements with those other LTAs. If corresponding service change arrangements cannot be agreed, any Qualifying Bus Service operating into an area where a corresponding service change arrangement has not been agreed shall be exempt from the requirement.

At the sole discretion of CW&CC, with agreement not to be unreasonably withheld, timetable changes may be made outside the advised Service Change Dates if circumstances occur that can be demonstrated to be outside the reasonable expectations of an operator.

For the avoidance of doubt, a timetable shall be deemed to have been changed if an operator changes one or more of the service timing, frequency, route, start or end point, hours of operation or days of operation, where such changes could

relate to the timetable in its entirety or any individual part of that timetable. A timetable shall also be deemed to have been changed if an operator cancels an entire Qualifying Bus Service.

In cases where operators run regular services on common stretches of route, bus operators will make best endeavours to co-ordinate timetabling to provide approximately even headways. Initial potential corridors that could be considered in respect of this are as follows:

- The A51 Corridor between Tarvin and Chester City Centre, served by the 82 and 84 services operated by D&G and Arriva respectively, with additional Stagecoach 7/8 services between Vicars Cross and the City Centre
- The A56 Corridor between the Hornsmill PH and Sutton Weaver, served by the 2 and X30 services operated by Stagecoach and Arriva respectively
- The A5104 corridor through Saltney served by Arriva's 3, 4 and 11 services to Broughton, Mold and Holywell respectively, and by Stagecoach's 16 service to Saltney.

5.4 City Rail Link Service

Subject to funding being made available, the bus operator responsible for the City Rail Link service (service 40 – Aintree Coachline) will work with Cheshire West and Chester Council to undertake improvements to the shuttle service between Chester rail station, Chester Bus Interchange and city centre to better integrate rail passengers and more directly facilitate engagement of rail passengers with the local bus network for connecting travel. In particular, these could include:

- Improvements to vehicle quality
- Improvements to service frequency
- Branding, signage and legibility improvements
- Incorporation into the PlusBus scheme and
- Potential ultimate restoration of the 'free at the point of use' nature of the service.

5.5 PlusBus Improvements

Subject to funding being made available, bus operators will work with Cheshire West and Chester Council to develop the existing PlusBus offer to facilitate easier integration of bus and rail. Bus operators support will include:

- Supporting the national level development and promotion of modern e-ticketing methods and accepting these products when they become available
- Supporting local development and promotion of the scheme
- Ensuring that all local bus services serving major railway stations including supported services and specialist services such as City Rail Link are within the scheme.

5.6 Bus-Rail Integration

Where bus routes serve rail stations in Cheshire West and Chester, bus operators will make best endeavours to timetable their services to provide supporting connections with rail services, particularly in cases where rail services are relatively infrequent.

Bus operators will also look at ways to strengthen their services to and from Chester Rail station as the wider Chester City Gateway scheme of station quality, capacity and accessibility improvements is developed.

5.7 Route Numbering and Simplification

Bus operators will make best endeavours to avoid route numbering conflict (i.e. situations in which multiple differing services with the same route number serve the same or nearby bus stops) and to eliminate this where it already occurs. As an initial commitment, bus operators with a route number 1, 1A or X1 serving Chester City Centre will agree a common numbering system so as to avoid repetition of these route numbers where possible.

5.8 Network Branding

Subject to sufficient funding being available, Bus Operators will work with Cheshire West and Chester to develop a new highly recognisable network-wide CW&C bus product branding, which can co-exist with neighbouring authorities for cross-boundary services. Bus operators will agree to use this branding on their bus vehicles alongside other branding and on all promotional materials including online timetables for all qualifying services with Cheshire West and Chester.

5.9 Fares and Ticketing

Subject to sufficient funding being made available and subject to the availability of a suitable back-office system to support its development, Bus Operators will work with Cheshire West and Chester Council to establish a local smart ticketing scheme to provide:

- Fully contactless multi-operator ticketing system to be made available on all bus services (commercial and contracted) within the borough.
- A daily fare capping model to be introduced as part of this system
- A universal youth fare cap for all fare-paying passengers under 19s with an ultimate aspiration for a further tier of similarly discounted travel for under 25s.
- Multi-modal compatibility with national and regional ticketing offers for non-bus modes.

Bus operators will commit to accepting these multi-modal tickets, fare capping and stipulations of the system immediately as it becomes operational.

Bus operators will also commit to continuing to provide passengers with the ability to pay cash on the bus if this is preferred, however it should be noted that this may not represent the best value for money for the passenger as fare capping is not possible with cash.

5.10 Vehicles

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, including via the national ZEBRA scheme or via a similar funding source, operators will develop and implement a programme of gradual replacement of their fleets with zero emissions technology. Initial Zero-Emissions vehicles will be used on high frequency, shorter distance bus corridors to be agreed with Enhanced Partnership partners and could include the Blacon Pointer services. In parallel, operators will work with Cheshire West and Chester Council to deliver minimum standards in relation to:

- Vehicle emissions by implementing a programme to retrofit existing fleets to conform with at least Euro VI standard
- Euro VI as a minimum vehicle emissions standard with a phased timeline towards a full zero emissions fleet
- RTI tracking to be made available on all commercial and supported service vehicles
- Contactless payment capability on all supported service vehicles
- Wifi and USB charging on all supported service vehicles
- Stop audio-announcement (if possible - subject to availability of national system provision elements).

All improvements made in relation to these features will comply with minimum standards on accessibility for people with recognised protected characteristics.

5.11 Drivers

All drivers operating bus services in Cheshire West and Chester are to be wearing the uniform supplied by their employer. Drivers are to be trained (including for the avoidance of doubt being engaged in ongoing training) in accordance with Certificate of Professional Competence requirements with particular emphasis on customer care and disability awareness. Drivers are to be aware of all ticketing arrangements and tickets issued by the relevant operators and the Council. Driving standards should recognise the requirement

for fuel efficient driving and for considerate driving providing a high standard of passenger comfort and minimising passenger trips and falls.

5.12 Any Other Facilities and Measures that could meet the stated objectives of the EP Plan

The above list of facilities and measures is not exhaustive and there may well be other facilities and measures that the bus operators will be responsible for providing to meet the stated objectives of the EP Plan, identified as the EP progresses. These will be added to the Scheme as and when required using the Bespoke Variation Mechanism described in Section 6 of this document, following discussion within the EP Forum.

6 Governance Arrangements

6.1 Introduction

In line with the legal requirements of the 2017 Act and the guidance in the creation of Enhanced Partnerships, and reflecting the practical circumstances that are prevalent locally within Cheshire West and Chester, a three tier governance structure is proposed. This is to consist of:

- An Enhanced Partnership Working Group – The group responsible for day-to-day operational decisions and discussion around the services that make up the Enhanced Partnership. The EP Working Group includes Cheshire West and Chester Council officers, representatives from all commercial bus operators within Cheshire West and Chester (Arriva, Stagecoach, D&G Buses, Warrington’s Own Buses, Arrowebrook, and Aintree Coachline), and any other professional internal or external staffing support deemed necessary.
- An Enhanced Partnership Forum - The committee of all Cheshire West and Chester Bus Operators, the Council, representatives of passenger groups, local businesses, the Local Enterprise Partnership and local authorities from neighbouring areas responsible for considering all issues affecting the Enhanced Partnership, and making recommendations in line with the Enhanced Partnership governance arrangements.
- An Enhanced Partnership Board - The committee of selected Bus Operator representatives, and Council representatives responsible for considering recommendations put forward by the EP Forum and making decisions including specific Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations using the mechanism discussed later in this section.

These three groups are described in more detail in the sub-sections below.

6.2 Enhanced Partnership Working Group

For the day-to-day operational decisions and discussion around the services that make up the Enhanced Partnership, an Enhanced Partnership Working Group will be incorporated to include Cheshire West and Chester Council officers, representatives from all commercial bus operators within Cheshire West and Chester (Arriva, Stagecoach, D&G Buses, Warrington's Own Buses, Arrowsebrook, and Aintree Coachline), and any other professional internal or external staffing support deemed necessary.

EP Working Group meetings are proposed to be held monthly and are used to discuss the ongoing operation and maintenance of the partnership, common issues to be resolved, and agreement of any small changes to services that may be implemented without the requirement to statutorily vary the Plan or the Scheme. At busy times, including the early months of formation of the Scheme it is expected that meetings will be required on closer to a fortnightly cycle. The Working Group also identifies the specification and scope of any significant items to be discussed by the Enhanced Partnership Forum including those that require variations to the Plan or Scheme, and will set the agenda for Forum meetings.

6.3 Enhanced Partnership Forum

For oversight purposes, the Enhanced Partnership will be overseen by an Enhanced Partnership Forum – in which all Operators will be entitled to participate and be invited, although attendance by individual Operators is voluntary.

The EP Forum will provide opportunities for discussing issues of all kinds affecting the Cheshire West and Chester bus network, consulting with and building consensus across the various stakeholders, requesting consideration of further work and action by the EP Working Group and, where necessary, making recommendations for decisions to the EP Board.

Membership of the Enhanced Partnership Forum will comprise the following:

- All Bus Operators running Qualifying Bus Services

- Cheshire West and Chester Council Officers
- Representatives from Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Representatives from Local Businesses and the LEP
- Representatives from Local Bus User Group/s
- Representatives from the Poverty and Truth Team for Cheshire West and Chester
- Representatives from the Corporate Disability Access Forum
- Any other representatives that the Council's own Disability Access Officer recommends should be invited for inclusion.

In addition, from time to time, other external organisations may be invited to join the EP Forum on an advisory basis for fixed periods to provide specialist expertise.

6.3.1 EP Forum Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The final EP Forum meeting of each financial year will be the designated EP Forum AGM. All Operators will be invited to self-nominate or nominate other willing Operators for EP Board membership, to represent themselves and all other Operators in their category, ahead of the EP Forum AGM. A ballot will be organised by the Council at the Annual General Meeting to select Operators' preferred EP Board representatives.

6.3.2 EP Forum Meeting Arrangements

EP Forum meetings will take place quarterly. EP Forum meetings will be arranged and minutes taken by Cheshire West and Chester Council officers. If possible an independent chair will be appointed for this group although, initially, it is expected that this would be chaired by a senior Cheshire West and Chester officer. Meeting length will vary according to agenda content but ordinarily expected to be one to two hours.

Agendas and meeting papers (including a copy of minutes and outcomes of decisions taken at the previous EP Board) will be circulated by the Council no less than one week in advance of each meeting, and draft minutes circulated no

more than two weeks after each meeting. Draft minutes will be approved at the next EP Forum meeting.

6.4 Enhanced Partnership Board

The EP Board will be the decision-making body of the Enhanced Partnership and will meet as required, no sooner than 14 days after the EP Forum meeting on, at most, a quarterly basis. Certain decisions of the EP Board may require a statutory Enhanced Partnership Plan Variation – the process for this is described in Section 6.9 below. Membership of the EP Board will comprise the following representatives:

- 2x Large Operators (voting)
- 2x Small Operators (voting)
- 2x Cheshire West and Chester Council officers (consisting of a director level individual and a member of the Council’s Public Transport Operations & Infrastructure team – both voting with decision veto).¹

Board meetings will require a quorum of at least two Operator representatives, with a minimum of one per category (Large/Small) and one Council representative. An Operator representative may, if necessary, arrange for an alternate or deputy from the same category to participate with voting rights.

6.4.1 Operator Representative Selection

Operators representing each of the categories of Operator membership above will be invited to self-nominate or nominate other willing Operators in writing to the Council prior to each EP Forum AGM. Where there are more than two nominees for any single category, all Bus Operators in the same category will be given the opportunity to vote by secret ballot undertaken among those present at the EP Forum AGM for a preferred representative. Voting will be on the basis of one vote per Operator (where Operators are part of the same

¹ The Council representatives will be considered to represent the interests of the directly contracted and supported services within the borough.

holding company or group, they will only be entitled to one vote between them). Operator representatives will be reselected on an annual basis.

The voting procedure for membership selection will be a simple majority and be administered by the Council. Where there is a tie, a run-off vote will take place between the leading tied Operators.

In the event that an EP Forum AGM ballot fails to select Operator representatives for one or more Operator category, the statutory Operator objection mechanism set out in the Enhanced Partnerships and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018 will be used to determine the views of Operators in that category for the purposes of EP Board votes (in terms of objection or otherwise to the proposals). The statutory operator objection mechanism is discussed in Section 5.3.7.

6.4.2 Role of EP Board members:

Operator representatives will be acting on behalf of all Operators in that category, not on behalf of their own company alone. Representatives will be responsible for ensuring attendance at all EP Board meetings in that year, and ensure they have:

- (a) fully reviewed and understood all meeting papers in advance of attendance
- (b) the required mandate from the Operators they represent.

6.4.3 EP Board decision making

Decisions of the EP Board will be made by way of a vote through a show of hands from those with voting rights. Decisions will be passed by way of a simple majority of all members of the EP Board entitled to vote (on a one voting member one vote basis). Members not exercising their vote will be deemed to be abstentions.

Operators will be entitled to make known their concerns in writing to the Council if they object to a particular vote of the EP Board. The Council will review the circumstances and consider whether these are such that use of its veto is required as provided for below.

6.4.4 Council veto

Cheshire West and Chester Council may, in exceptional circumstances, exercise a veto over Board decisions which it may reasonably believe or suspect as having anti-competitive implications or being otherwise significantly against the public interest. In these cases, the Council must set out in writing for the Board its reasons for doing so. The LTA veto cannot be used either directly or indirectly to impose a new spending commitment on an operator, or require them to maintain a commercially unsustainable one.

These controls ensure that the voting system:

- Does not allow an individual Operator to influence the Enhanced Partnership to its own commercial benefit or to harm competitors;
- That there is no opportunity for a group of Operators to vote in a co-ordinated manner to mutual benefit on a sustained basis; or
- That there is no discrimination between Operators; and that actual or potential competition, entry to new services and by new Operators, or innovation, is not inhibited.

If the Council veto mechanism is used, the issues that led to the use of the veto will be discussed as a matter of priority within the EP Working Group to seek and identify a mutually acceptable resolution. The resulting revised proposition will then be passed, via the EP Forum, back to the EP Board where a further vote will be held.

6.4.5 Meeting observers

Any other Bus Operator, and Council representatives will be able to attend the EP Board meetings as observers but will not have the right to vote. Observers may be invited to make comments or ask questions of the EP Board at the Chair's discretion or invited to defer these until the next EP Forum meeting.

6.4.6 Meeting arrangements

EP Board meetings will take place not less than 14 days following EP Forum meetings with provision for additional meetings as required to take decisions

which in the opinion of the Chair cannot be deferred to a scheduled meeting, provided that a quorum can be achieved, with not less than one week's notice being given. Meetings will be arranged, chaired and minutes taken by the Council. Meeting length will vary according to agenda content but ordinarily be one to two hours.

Agendas and meeting papers will be circulated to all Board members no less than one week in advance of each meeting date, and draft minutes circulated no more than two weeks after each meeting. Copies will also be distributed to all EP Forum members so any issues or concerns can be discussed with the relevant Operator representative, to be raised at the EP Board meeting. Draft minutes will be approved at the next EP Board meeting.

6.5 Data Sharing

Within the context of the three groups described above, all participants will agree to the sharing of data subject to the signing of any confidentiality agreements required by the individual parties in the case of commercially sensitive items. Data-sharing arrangements will continue on a voluntary basis for the purposes of aiding EP development and future monitoring. Provisions in the 2000 Act, inserted by the 2017 Act, and Regulations made under these enable the LTA to obtain certain, specified information about local bus services that operate either within or into the EP area in connection with preparing, or carrying out various functions as part of an EP plan or scheme.

Cheshire West and Chester Council may request information which they believe:

- (a) is relevant to the work being undertaken on the EP; and
- (b) they need and do not already hold as a result of existing information sharing arrangements.

Cheshire West and Chester Council will engage proactively with local bus operators before and throughout the information request process to understand the ways in which operators hold the relevant information and how long it may

take to collate and provide. Any concerns expressed by local bus operators about the scope of the information requested will be considered carefully.

The data that may be requested under the data-sharing agreement may be summarised as follows:

- How and when a local service operated by an operator is used by passengers once the EP has been made or varied.
- How and when the local service is likely to be used by passengers once the EP plan or scheme has been made or, as the case may be, varied.
- The structure of fares for journeys on the local service.
- The types of tickets used by passengers, and by particular types of passenger, on the local service.
- The time taken for journeys, and parts of journeys, on the local service including information about adherence to timetables at all times or at certain times of the day.
- The total distance, in miles or kilometres, covered by all vehicles used by the operator in operating qualifying local services in the area.
- The vehicles used on local bus services, including information about the age of those vehicles, emissions and types of fuel or power.
- The result of any activities undertaken with a view to promoting increased passenger use of the local service. and
- The particulars of a local service's registration under section 6 of the Transport Act 1985. This information could, for example, be useful if the authority intends (or is required) to take over the registration function from the traffic commissioner.

6.6 Enforcement

For the purposes of enforcement of the stipulations of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme, the Council (either directly where the Council has delegated to it Traffic Commissioner Powers, or indirectly via the Traffic Commissioner), will apply the following arrangements in relation to local bus service registrations.

If a Bus Operator should fail to observe or perform any of the Requirements of this Enhanced Partnership Scheme or meet the Punctuality and Reliability standards of the EP Scheme to the reasonable satisfaction of the Council, then the Council shall be entitled to serve a written warning notice on the Bus Operator. The warning notice will detail the failure to observe or perform the Requirements or Punctuality or Reliability standards in question with sufficient detail as the Bus Operator may require to enable it to understand and identify the alleged failure(s) (a 'Warning Notice'). The Council may also, at its discretion, invite the Operator to participate in discussions about any specified failures, before a Warning Notice is issued.

In the event that a Warning Notice is served on a Bus Operator which, in the opinion of the Bus Operator (acting reasonably) is factually inaccurate, is unfair or unreasonable, or has been issued in error, the Bus Operator shall be entitled to provide evidence to support their claims. The Operator may also request a face-to-face meeting with the relevant representatives of the Council to discuss the evidence and express its concerns in person. The parties shall meet as soon as reasonably practicable at a mutually convenient location and discuss the Warning Notice and the Bus Operator's concerns in good faith. In the event that the Council is of the view that the Bus Operator's concerns are valid, it shall withdraw and cancel the Warning Notice with immediate effect. Such withdrawn and cancelled Warning Notice shall not be deemed a valid Warning Notice for the purposes of calculating the number of Warning Notices issued against a Bus Operator as below.

The Warning Notice shall state on its face that it is a Warning Notice and shall set out the measures which the Council requires the Bus Operator to take (acting reasonably) to ensure that the Requirement(s) or Punctuality or Reliability standards are met, do not occur again, and the reasonable timescales within which the Bus Operator is to effect such measures. The Bus Operator shall use all reasonable endeavours to comply with the terms of the Warning Notice. In the event that the Council serves more than three Warning Notices on a single Bus Operator within any continuous twelve month period, or the Bus Operator fails to remedy a Warning Notice within the specified

timescales without reasonable excuse, the Council shall, subject first to the outcome of the statutory appeals process available to the Bus Operator if engaged, be entitled to cancel the local bus service registration.

In arriving at a decision regarding the issuing of a Warning Notice or cancelling a bus service registration, the Council will take into account the effects of any agreed scheme or improvement which was anticipated to have a beneficial effect on the Bus Operator's operations, but which has not been delivered or materialised, to the extent that the delivery of such scheme or improvement was outside the Bus Operator's control.

6.7 Implications for small and medium sized operators

Given the variety of bus operators involved (in terms of market share, fleet size, company turnover and structure), it is important to ensure that the effects of the partnership do not unduly impact upon smaller operators' ability to engage or to comply with requirements.

The EP Board will therefore consist of representatives from both large operators (defined as those representing more than 10% of the total registered mileage of qualifying services), and small operators (defined as those representing less than 10%). In addition, it should be noted that Bus Operator Requirements will not be placed upon certain categories of service (Non-qualifying Services), which represent many smaller operators' main commercial interests.

For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Large, and Small Operators will be published on the EP website at the start of each Council financial year.

6.8 Review of EP Scheme

Once the EP Scheme is made, it will be reviewed by the EP Forum every six months following publication of data on progress towards targets, as required by the BSIP – this will ensure any necessary action is taken to deliver the targets set out in the BSIP. Cheshire West and Chester Council will initiate each review. EP Forum will, at these times, have the ability to recommend any

specific additional groups that should be consulted and these will be invited to attend specific EP Forum meetings.

The EP Forum can also decide to review specific elements of the scheme on an ad-hoc basis. EP Forum members should contact Cheshire West and Chester Council officers using the following email address –

EP@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk - explaining what the issue is and its urgency. The LTA will then decide whether to table at the next scheduled meeting or make arrangements for all or the necessary EP Forum members to gather more quickly.

6.9 Bespoke Arrangements for Varying or Revoking the Enhanced Partnership Scheme

Under powers at s.138E of the Transport Act 2000, Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations where this section is quoted will be subject to the bespoke voting mechanism also as set out in this section.

Changes to or new flexibility provisions added to the EP Scheme under s.138E of the Transport Act 2000 shall only be included in the EP scheme if they satisfy the statutory objection mechanism as set out in The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018.

6.9.1 Proposer of a variation

Consideration will be given to potential EP Scheme variations highlighted either by a local authority, one of the organisations represented on the EP Forum, or by an operator of local bus services. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the BSIP, EP Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be in writing and submitted to EP@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk. The LTA will forward all requests onto all EP Forum and EP Board members within 5 working days.

6.9.2 Decision-making process and bespoke objection mechanism

On receipt of a request for a variation under this section, Cheshire West and Chester Council will reconvene the EP Board, giving at least 14 days' notice for the meeting, to consider the proposed variation. If the board members in attendance and quorate unanimously agree the contents of the variation, Cheshire West and Chester Council will make the EP Scheme variation within seven working days and publish the revised EP Scheme on its website. Board members not expressing a view at the meeting will be deemed to be abstaining from the decision.

If there is no unanimous agreement of the EP Board to the proposed variation, Cheshire West and Chester Council may commence the statutory objection mechanism as set out in The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2017. In this case, if objections do not reach the statutory objection limits⁷, the variation will be made and will come into effect after the usual statutory period as applicable.

6.10 Revocation of an EP Scheme

If the LTA or another member of the EP Forum believes it is necessary to revoke the EP Scheme, the EP Board will be reconvened. If the decision is taken to revoke the EP Scheme, it will follow the legislative procedures for revocation or use bespoke arrangements as set out earlier in this section.

If at any point in the future, any area covered by this EP Scheme is included in a bus franchising scheme, the relevant requirements set out in this EP Scheme document will cease to apply to areas covered by the franchising scheme, in line with the arrangements set out in the franchising scheme.⁸

⁷ See EP Guidance for further background on the statutory objection mechanism

⁸ Section 123H(6)-(8) of the Transport Act 2000

Appendices

A.	Cheshire West and Chester Schedule of Existing Bus Services	52
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A. Cheshire West and Chester Schedule of Existing Bus Services

Table A.1: Cheshire West and Chester – Table of Existing Bus Services – Dec 2021

Route No.	Between	And	Via	Buses per hour					Operator	Type
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun		
1	Chester Rail Station	Liverpool	Chester Rail Station, Chester Zoo and Ellesmere Port	2	1	2	1	2	Stagecoach	Inter-Urban
1	Chester Rail Station	Wrexham	Chester Business Park and Pulford	4	2	4	2	2	Arriva	Inter-Urban
1/1A	Chester Bus Interchange	Blacon	Circular	6	1	6	1	2	Arriva / Stagecoach Blacon Pointer VQP	Local
1	Northwich	Weaverham/Rudheath	Greenbank	2	1	2	1	1	Arriva / D&G Coaches (Sunday)	Inter-Urban
2	Chester Bus Interchange	Ellesmere Port / Runcorn	Hope Farm	2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	Inter-Urban
3	Chester Grosvenor Street	Broughton	Broughton Retail Park	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	Inter-Urban
4/4A/4S	Chester	Mold	Broughton and Hawarden	2	1	2	1	2	Arriva	Inter-Urban
4	Northwich / Leftwich / Kingsmead	Barnton	Victoria Hospital	2	1	2	1	0.5	Arriva / D & G Coaches (Sunday)	Local
5/5A	Chester Rail Station	Huntington / Wrexham	Caldy Valley	3	1	3	1	1	Stagecoach	Inter-Urban
5	Ellesmere Port	Mold	Queensferry	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	Inter-Urban
6	Ellesmere Port	Little Sutton	Circular	3	0	3	0	0	Stagecoach	Local
7	Chester Bus Interchange	Vicars Cross	Boughton	2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	Local
7	Ellesmere Port	Rivacre	Overpool	2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	Local
7A/7C	Winsford Industrial Estate	Winsford town centre	Winsford Rail Station, Over St Johns	2	0	2	0	0	Arriva	Local
8/9	Chester Bus Interchange	Vicars Cross / Piper's Ash	Green Lane	2	0	2	0	1	Stagecoach	Local
CAT 9/9A	Northwich	Warrington	Lostock Gralam / Barnton and Stretton	1	0	1	0	0	Warrington's Own	Rural
10/10A	Chester Bus Interchange	Connah's Quay / Flint	Blacon and Queensferry	4	1	4	1	2	Arriva	Inter-Urban
11/11A/11C/11M/11X	Chester Bus Interchange	Rhyl	Broughton and Holywell	2	0.5	2	0.5	0.5	Arriva	Inter-Urban
15/15A/15B	Chester Bus Interchange	Saughall	Blacon	1	0	1	0	1	Arriva / Stagecoach / D&G (Sundays) Blacon Pointer VQP	Local
16	Chester Bus Interchange	Saltney	Handbridge	4	1	4	1	2	Stagecoach	Local
22/X22	Chester Bus Interchange	West Kirby	Neston and Heswall	1	0	1	0	0	Al's Coaches	Inter-Urban
26	Ellesmere Port	Guilden Sutton	Chester	0.5	0	0	0	0	Arrowbrook Coaches	Rural
31/31A	Northwich (31) / Winsford (31A)	Crewe	Winsford (31)	2	0	2	0	0	Arriva	Inter-Urban
37/37W	Northwich / Winsford	Sandbach (37W) / Crewe (37)	Winsford and Middlewich	2	1	2	1	0	Arriva	Inter-Urban
40	Chester Rail Station	Chester City Centre	Circular	4	0	4	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Local
41	Chester Rail Station	Tattenhall / Whitchurch	Waverton	1	0	1	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Rural
48/48A	Northwich	Frodsham	Greenbank and Kingsley	0.5	0	0	0	0	Warrington's Own	Rural
51	Chester Bus Interchange	Plas Newton	Weston Grove	2	0	2	0	1	Stagecoach	Local
53	Chester Bus Interchange	Kingsway	Hoole Road	4	0	4	0	1	Stagecoach	Local
61/62	Chester Bus Interchange	Higher Kinnerton	Westminster Park, Dodleston	1	0	1	0	0	Stagecoach	Rural
82/82C	Chester Bus Interchange	Rudheath	Kelsall and Northwich	1	0	1	0	0	D & G Coaches	Inter-Urban
84	Chester Bus Interchange	Crewe	Vicar's Cross and Tarvin	1	1	1	1	1	Arriva	Inter-Urban
89	Northwich	Knutsford	Lostock Gralam	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	D & G Coaches	Rural
102/103	Ellesmere Port	Cheshire Oaks	Hope Farm	0	0	0	0	1	Stagecoach	Local
200	Chester Bus Interchange	Chester Racecourse	Shopper Hopper Circular	4	0	4	0	0	Stagecoach	Local
204	Chester Rail Station	Deeside Industrial Park	Blacon and Saughall	0.5	0	0	0	0	Stagecoach	Inter-Urban
272	Ellesmere Port	Neston	Little Sutton and Hooton	0.67	0	0	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Inter-Urban
487	Ness Gardens	Liverpool	Bebington and Birkenhead	2	1	2	1	1	Arriva	Inter-Urban
PR1	Chester Bus Interchange	Wrexham Road P&R	Chester Foregate Street	5	0	5	0	4	Stagecoach	Local
PR2	Chester Bus Interchange	Boughton Heath P&R	Chester Foregate Street	6	0	6	0	4	Stagecoach	Local
PR3	Chester Bus Interchange	Chester Zoo P&R	Chester Foregate Street	5	0	5	0	4	Stagecoach	Local
PR4	Chester Bus Interchange	Sealand Road P&R	Chester Foregate Street	5	0	5	0	4	Stagecoach	Local
X1	Chester Bus Interchange	Liverpool	Chester Zoo and Ellesmere Port	2	0	2	0	1	Stagecoach	Inter-Urban
X1	Chester Rail Station	Ruthin	Mold	0.2	0	0.2	0	0	M & H Coaches	Rural
X4	Chester Railway Station	Mold	Chester and Buckley	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	Inter-Urban
X30	Chester Bus Interchange	Warrington	Frodsham and Runcorn	1	0.25	1	0.25	1	Arriva / Stagecoach (Evenings and Weekends)	Inter-Urban
X31	Northwich	Over	Winsford	0	1	0	1	0	Arriva	Inter-Urban
			Totals	101	15	99	15	40		

