

A PUBLIC TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR BERKHAMSTED: MOTION

Background:

In light of the climate emergency, increasing car traffic through the town, and Berkhamsted Town Council's commitment to reduce carbon emissions, the Town Council wishes to consider options to mitigate these threats by improving bus services for residents, including the creation a new or enhanced bus services.

Berkhamsted Town Council wishes to conduct a study to enhance public transport within the town, making the facilities in the town more accessible without using cars.

Motion:

Berkhamsted Town Council believes that improved bus service provision would benefit the town, and may potentially require new services. Berkhamsted Town Council resolves to develop a new bus strategy for the town, investigate potential operational models, feasibility, desirability, impact and costs to deliver these improvements. The Town Council resolves to produce a report outlining options and recommendations, which the Town Council can implement in due course. This strategy development shall be undertaken by an expert consultant, under supervision from the Town Clerk and under scrutiny from The Bus Committee.

Objectives of improving bus service provision:

Community & inclusion:

- To provide a valued and appreciated services for Berkhamsted residents.
- To facilitate travel around Berkhamsted including to key destinations such as the High-street and the station.
- To provide a transport option for those unable to drive.
- To increase visitors to Berkhamsted Businesses.

Carbon emission and traffic reduction:

- To reduce carbon emissions from car travel in Berkhamsted.
- To reduce traffic into the centre of Berkhamsted while maintaining footfall to businesses.

Reduced cost of travel:

- To reduce daily transport costs for those moving around Berkhamsted and commuters.
- To provide an affordable alternative to parking in the town centre.
- Reduce the need for extra vehicles for each household.

Key requirements of improved bus services:

The town Council believes that bus services should be:

- Regular, enabling flexible use.
- Reliable, with high on time performance.
- Efficient, offering short journey times.
- Clean and comfortable.
- Have sufficient capacity that all potential users should be accommodated.
- Appreciated by Berkhamsted residents.
- Complementary to - rather than undermining - existing providers and routes

The town council recognises that there shall be trade-offs between these objectives, and that some options may not be feasible, practical, or advisable.

The consultant's role is to use their experience to guide the Town Council on potential operating models and their various merits.

Accordingly, Berkhamsted Town Council agrees to the following measures:

- That the Clerk shall research potential expert consultants to develop options to improve Berkhamsted bus services.
- Under the supervision of the support services committee, the Clerk shall select and hire the consultant.

The expert consultant shall consider and advise upon relevant factors relating to future bus services. These shall include, but not be limited to:

- Optimal routes
- Frequency of services
- Consistency of services
- Timings to link with other public transport services
- Capacity
- Operators
- Pricing
- Tendering processes
- Structure, timing, and management of a trial period
- Achievable performance objectives and definition of 'success'
- Operating hours.
- Any other factors which the expert consultant or the Town Council deem relevant to the delivery of a successful bus service.

The consultant should consider these factors, consult with relevant local stakeholders, and using their expertise, outline the various options available to the Town Council, followed by recommendations for preferred solutions.

Stakeholders shall include but not be limited to:

- Existing bus service providers in the area
- Local community groups
- Other public transport providers
- Relevant members of the public

The consultant shall also have to liaise with relevant local government bodies to investigate any legislative requirements.

The consultant shall share their list of stakeholders with the Bus Committee at the start of their investigations, such that others can be included if necessary.

The expert consultant shall also advise on how the town council can test and enact its chosen strategy, including lawful commissioning processes, trial periods, and exit strategies should these be necessary.

The options and recommendations should be communicated in a written report, accompanied by a presentation to the Town Council. Commercially sensitive elements of the report may be communicated in a separate section, not visible to the public.

Expert Consultant Profile:

The consultant should:

- Be knowledgeable regarding the operations and challenges in bus service operation, having worked in a professional capacity in public transport delivery at a senior level.
- Understand the basic principles of public procurement, and the requirement for non-discrimination.
- Be able to communicate the variety of options available to the Town Council, and explain the reason for any preferred solution.
- Be able to produce a written report of their findings and recommendations.
- Be willing to present their findings to interested members of the public.
- Be able to lead consultation meetings with relevant local stakeholders, with the support of the clerk's team.

Administrative requirements:

Stakeholder consultations shall be minuted in summary form by an officer of the Town Council, but for commercial confidentiality reasons shall not be made public. The consultant may outline findings and key issues in an anonymised form where appropriate, and where this does not infringe the commercial confidentiality of the consultee. Where necessary the consultant can make use of Part II sections of Town Council meetings which are closed to the public.

Where the report outlines strategic and operational choices, the Clerk shall submit these to the Full Town Council for deliberation and decision.

Timing:

In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Town Council recognises that behaviour patterns may shift after lockdowns end. Accordingly the consultant should not be hired until there is a reasonable ability to assess potential user behaviour and requirements. This shall be at the discretion of the Town Clerk in consultation with the Town Council.

Deliverables:

The expert consultant shall compile a report which outlines a strategic vision and the various options available to the Town Council in order to improve bus services, these shall be accompanied

by key considerations which impact the suitability of any given option. The expert consultant shall recommend preferred options, giving appropriate justification.

Timeline:

The Town Council hopes to start the bus service in 2022. The report should be delivered in reasonable time in order to enable services to start in 2022.