

# **Cheshire West and Chester Enhanced Partnership Scheme**

June 2024  
**Transport and Highways**



# Appendix 3 – Enhanced Partnership Scheme

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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**

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
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 (EP)	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 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.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
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, 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.
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"> <li>• Large: equal to or greater than 10%</li> <li>• Small: less than 10%.</li> </ul> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Large, and Small Operators will be published on the CW&amp;C website at the start of each Council financial year.</p>
Measures	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.
Non-qualifying Bus Service	Services excluded from classification as Qualifying Bus Services.
Qualifying Bus Service	<p>A registered local bus service with one or more stopping places within the geographical area of the Enhanced Partnership, with the exception of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any schools or works registered local bus service not eligible for Bus Service Operators Grant</li> </ul>

**Term****Meaning**

- 
- 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 excluded from all or specific requirements of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme.

For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Qualifying Bus Services will be published at the start of each Council financial year.

**Requirements**

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.

**Traffic  
Commissioner  
Powers**

'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.

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## **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:

Theme	BSIP and Enhanced Partnership Plan Objectives
Connectivity	1. Enhance transport connectivity within and between urban and rural areas and across local, regional and national borders.
Efficiency	2. Provide and develop reliable and efficient transport networks, that are integrated, customer focused, and resilient to provide an attractive and viable alternative to the private car.
Economic growth and regeneration	3. 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.
Sustainability and environment	4. Reduce carbon emissions from transport by adapting our transport networks to take advantage of low carbon and renewable resources.  5. Protect and enhance the local environment within Cheshire West and surrounding areas.
Inclusive networks	6. Create a highly accessible, affordable, sustainable transport network to increase equality of opportunity.  7. Install minimum standards of transport accessibility for all areas regardless of individual circumstance.
Health, safety and wellbeing	8. Contribute to safer and more secure transport in Cheshire West and surrounding areas and promote types of transport which are beneficial to health.

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 a series of proposals for both the immediate investment programme (2024-2026) and the subsequent period 2026-2029 which will address the delivery themes specified in the National Bus Strategy.

The investment programmes for 2024-2026, and for 2026-2029, with a summary of the measures included within each category, 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 Programme to 2025/2026 financial year**

<b>Intervention Category</b>	<b>Intervention</b>
1. Bus priority infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borough wide bus priority study</li> <li>• Cheshire Oaks Bus Priority feasibility study and business case for services from Liverpool and Chester</li> <li>• Borough wide highways management strategy</li> </ul>
2: Other bus infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borough wide implementation of EPI on key higher frequency demand services</li> <li>• Study to assess current operations of the Chester P&amp;R services</li> <li>• Chester P&amp;R cash and card payments</li> <li>• Frodsham and Tattenhall rural bus stop enhancements</li> </ul>
3: Bus services support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support network sustainability</li> <li>• Trial service extensions</li> <li>• Mount Pleasant/ Moulton to Northwich new minibus service</li> <li>• Service enhancements</li> <li>• Borough wide bus connectivity assessment and wider network review</li> <li>• Study to consider service provision between Ellesmere Port and Origin Industrial area</li> </ul>
4: Fares support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borough wide youth fare cap initiative (16–18-year-olds)</li> <li>• Borough wide student bus ticket offer- initial market research and financial modelling</li> </ul>
5: Ticketing reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 82 / 84 Crewe – Chester pilot ticketing scheme</li> <li>• Borough wide multi operator ticketing - initial feasibility study</li> </ul>
	Borough wide bus marketing campaign
6: Other schemes and measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DRT- Additional Saturday service within existing itravel zone</li> <li>• DRT shuttle opportunities</li> <li>• Borough wide route number simplification</li> </ul>

## Programme to 2025/2026 financial year

Intervention Category	Intervention
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Borough wide multi-modal timetabling coordination</li><li>• Borough wide general timetabling coordination</li><li>• Borough wide Events Management Plan</li></ul>

## Programme to 2028/2029 financial year

7: Service level and network coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Explore opportunities for new services</li><li>• Local service frequency enhancements</li><li>• Inter-urban service frequency enhancements</li><li>• Rural service frequency enhancements</li></ul>
8: Bus priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Follow on bus priority option development, feasibility, business case and design work</li><li>• Chester to Cheshire Oaks corridor</li><li>• UTC and UTMC system overhaul</li></ul>
9: Lower and simpler fares	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Borough wide youth fare cap initiative (16–18-year-olds)</li><li>• Extension of current £2 (or equivalent) low fare scheme beyond December 2024</li><li>• Trial borough wide £1 fare cap for jobseekers and armed service veterans</li><li>• Borough wide student bus ticket offer</li></ul>
10: Ticketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Borough wide multi-operator ticketing</li></ul>
11: Waiting and interchange facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved bus stop waiting areas and information</li></ul>
12. Bus information and network identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhanced Partnership network branding scheme</li><li>• Real time information at high frequency bus stops</li><li>• App update</li></ul>
13. Bus passenger experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Borough wide enhanced cleaning and maintenance regime</li><li>• Borough wide safety and security upgrades at bus stops, on buses and along key walk routes</li><li>• Enhanced driver training</li><li>• Customer relations improvements</li></ul>

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## Programme to 2028/2029 financial year

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Night angels and additional security at Chester Bus Interchange</li></ul>
14. Bus fleet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Zero emission fleet</li><li>• Minimum emissions standards</li></ul>
15. Accessibility and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Borough wide audible stop announcements</li><li>• Install raised kerbs at bus stops</li></ul>
16. Longer term transformation of the network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Winsford Bus Interchange feasibility and design work</li><li>• Ellesmere Port Industrial Area Interchange feasibility and design work</li><li>• A55 public transport corridor study</li><li>• DRT trials in unserved areas of the borough</li><li>• Preparatory work for multi-modal ticketing integration</li><li>• BRT concept development, feasibility and design work</li><li>• Gadbrook Park improved bus connectivity</li><li>• Hoole Road Park &amp; Ride feasibility and design work</li></ul>

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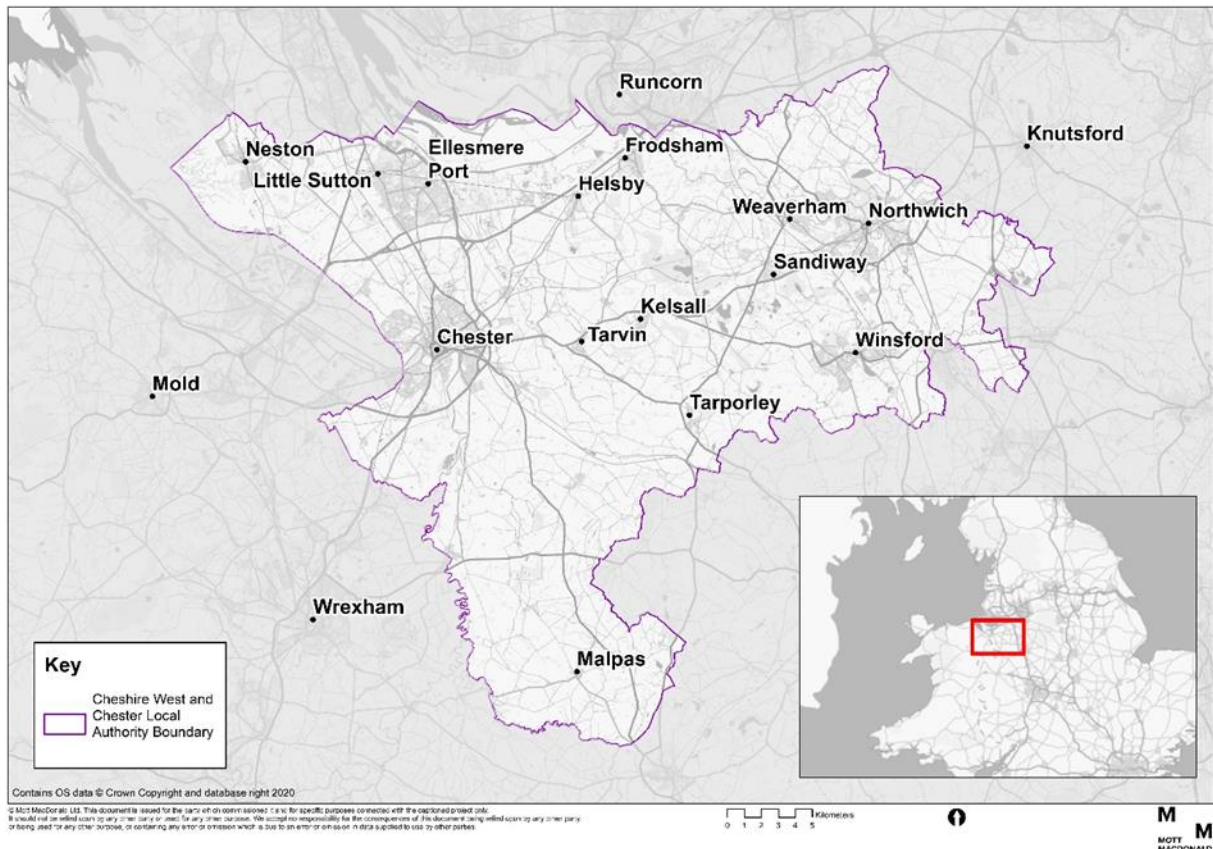
This EPS document contains details on the interventions which were included within the BSIP and these will form the primary means of delivery of improvements to the bus network in Cheshire West and Chester.

### 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 0.1

Figure 0.1: 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 regularly. 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 were made on 30 April 2022 and revised in August 2024 following the 2024 update to the BSIP.

The EP Scheme will have no specific end date but will be reviewed by the EP partners regularly via their scheduled Forum and Board structures.

### **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
- 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 Blacon Pointer Former Voluntary Quality Partnership**

Under the Enhanced Partnership, Cheshire West and Chester Council will propagate the former voluntary agreement signed between the Council, Arriva, and Stagecoach in respect of the Blacon Pointer (14/14A/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 2024
- 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 Bus Priority**

Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to complete a study on the most appropriate and beneficial locations for bus priority across the borough. These are the

locations where other vehicle-on-bus delay occurs and at which bus priority infrastructure may be beneficial to improve journey times, reliability, and punctuality.

As an initial output, Cheshire West and Chester Council will produce a feasibility study and Strategic Outline Business Case to explore opportunities for bus priority to provide easy and quick priority access into and out of Cheshire Oaks Retail Village, and creation of a bus corridor along the route between Chester station and Cheshire Oaks.

Building on the results of the bus priority study, the Council will explore how additional highways management measures could help alleviate areas of delay and congestion including potential Red Routes type measures such as on street parking restrictions during peak times etc and methods for enforcing such interventions.

Subject to satisfactory business cases being completed and funding being made available, the Council will undertake to implement bus priority improvements on routes identified by the study and subsequent feasibility work, taking these schemes through detailed design to delivery.

#### **4.2.2 UTC and UTMC System Overhaul**

Subject to sufficient funding being made available in the period post 2025/26 financial year, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to implement an overhaul of all Urban Traffic Control (UTC) and Urban Traffic Management and Control (UTMC) infrastructure including the addition of Fusion software within Chester, Northwich, Ellesmere Port and Winsford to provide selective vehicle detection, traffic light priority and dynamic timetable recovery, to improve bus priority and journey times across the borough.

#### **4.2.3 Bus Stop Infrastructure Improvements**

Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to implement EPI (cloud-based electronic passenger information software) systems at bus stops on key high frequency and high demand routes, to provide real time journey information as opposed to scheduled bus times. This will involve the commissioning and setting up of a cloud-based server, set-up of the SIRI connector to deliver the passenger information, and establishment of a fund to maintain the system for an initial period of three years.

The Council also undertakes to implement a programme of bus stop improvements at rural bus stop locations. This will include the installation of raised kerbs and Real Time Displays at specific bus stop locations, initially in Frodsham and Tattenhall.

Subject to sufficient funding being made available post 2025/26 financial year, the Council will provide enhanced shelters, seating and passenger information at high frequency stops including Cheshire Oaks, Chester Zoo, Countess of Chester Hospital, Neston Brook Street, Chester Pepper Street, Northwich Rail Station, Winsford Town Centre, Winsford Rail Station. This will include a rollout of e-Ink (electronic paper display) technology to provide a more cost-effective digital information delivery system.

Subject to suitable funding availability, The Council will implement an enhanced programme of cleaning and maintenance of their bus stop and station estate to ensure

that litter is not allowed to accumulate, spills are caught and resolved quickly, and that the facilities are generally presentable and in a good working condition.

Again, subject to sufficient funding availability, the Council will implement lighting upgrades and/or LED installation on walking routes to key bus stops/shelters with frequent evening services, or within areas of anti-social behaviour/vandalism such as Ellesmere Port to enhance personal safety and security. The Council will further look to work with university of Chester to explore options to provide Night Angels and additional security at Chester Bus Interchange during busy evening periods, to promote and ensure student safety.

#### **4.2.4 Park and Ride Investment**

Cheshire West and Chester Council has undertaken to amend the contract with the Park & Ride operator to enable higher rates of pay for drivers to enable them to handle cash on board Park & Ride buses. This has provided the facility for P&R users to pay for the service by both cash and card and has allowed the removal of the life expired payment machines at P&R sites.

The Council also undertakes to complete a study to assess the current operations of the Park & Ride services with a view to making recommendations about the future. This will recommend and test a number of different Park & Ride operational scenarios to identify the optimum mode of operation for the service in the future. Subject to sufficient funding being made available, the Council will then act on the recommendations of the study.

Subject to the recommendations of the forthcoming Park & Ride investment study, the development of a successful business case, and sufficient funding being made available, the Council will pursue the delivery of a fifth P&R site at Hoole Road to the north of the city.

#### **4.2.5 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.

#### **4.2.6 Minimum Bus Vehicle Standards**

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, and alongside bus operators, Cheshire West and Chester Council will pursue opportunities to retrofit older buses within the existing fleet used on both commercial and supported routes to ensure they meet minimum agreed standards including:

- 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
- Wi-Fi and USB charging on all supported service vehicles



- Stop audio-announcement (if possible - subject to availability of national system provision elements).

#### **4.2.7 Bus Interchange Development**

Subject to the recommendations of feasibility study work, the development of a successful business case, and sufficient funding being made available, the Council will pursue the delivery of new bus interchange facilities for Winsford and for the Ellesmere Port Industrial Area (Origin). Seek to develop the latter as part of a potential multi-modal interchange project to include a new (relocated) rail station on the Ellesmere Port / Helsby line.

#### **4.2.8 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 Bus Services Support**

Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to complete a study to determine levels of existing connectivity between production areas and key points of attraction across the borough, and to produce a Network Review to consider an optimum network from the bottom up to meet the requirements of the travelling public. This review will determine where new services may be required to meet existing demand, and to identify areas of poor service and correspondingly low demand at which significant new demand might be induced via the provision of enhanced services.

On the strength of this review, the Council will allocate funding to support network sustainability to prevent further deregistration of services considered critical, to enable trials of new services and extensions of existing services (in collaboration with bus operators), to support and enhance existing service frequencies on strategically important routes and to consider how better to serve pockets of poorly served demand. This will include a specific study to consider the best way of providing enhanced bus provision to the Ellesmere Port Industrial Area (Origin).

Subject to further funding being made available in the period post 2025/26 financial year, the Council will continue to work with operators to explore the opportunity for new services and to provide enhanced service and frequency levels on routes across the borough to continue to grow the market and engender mode shift from the private car. This will include feasibility work for potential BRT or QBT services and feasibility

studies for the establishment of Mid-Cheshire Metro services, and the A55 public transport corridor.

#### **4.3.2 Fares Support**

Cheshire West and Chester Council will work with operators to design and model the impact of a borough-wide £1 youth fare cap for 16-18 year olds. The study will also examine the impact of alternative offers / provision for young people and will engage with operators and other stakeholders to establish a task force and ultimately a working group to oversee the project and a trial implementation of the initiative. In parallel, the Council will work with operators on a similar borough-wide student bus ticket.

Subject to satisfactory modelling outcomes and funding availability in the post 2025/26 financial year period, implement and extend both youth and student fare schemes for an initial trial period of 1 year, also considering the implementation of a further £1 fare cap for job-seekers and armed service veterans in parallel.

Subject to sufficient funding being made available and, depending on the status of the national scheme, consider funding a further extension of the existing £2 single journey fare scheme beyond the current end date of December 2024.

#### **4.3.3 Ticketing Reform**

Cheshire West and Chester Council will work with operators to broker a multi-operator ticketing scheme and fare allocation agreement for the A51 Tarvin Road corridor served by the 82, 84, 7 and 8A. This will act as a pilot system for a wider multi-operator ticketing agreement.

The Council will also undertake to produce a feasibility study for a wider multi-operator ticketing scheme, identifying roles, use of technology and a fair system of fare allocation.

Subject to the feasibility study being successful and the agreement being acceptable and accepted by the operators, and subject to suitable funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council will undertake to implement the multi-operator ticketing scheme previously identified and to fulfil its role as agreement broker and scheme owner.

#### **4.3.4 Gadbrook Park Connectivity**

Alongside bus operators, and subject to sufficient funding being made available, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertake to consider, review and eventually provide enhanced public transport routes to Gadbrook Park to improve the accessibility of this site by sustainable modes, and to lay the groundwork for the development of a new rail station in this location as part of a future rail strategy for the borough.

#### **4.3.5 Bus Marketing Campaign**

Working with operators via the EP Working Group, Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to develop a co-ordinated borough-wide bus marketing campaign to properly publicise the improvements proposed as part of the BSIP and to promote sustainable travel across the borough. In particular, a specific target for the campaign

will be the concessionary bus market which has declined significantly since COVID, and increasing the mode share of Park & Ride via discounted travel periods and other promotions.

#### **4.3.6 Demand Responsive Transport**

Cheshire West and Chester Council undertakes to consider and trial initial expansions of the DRT ittravel service by providing an on-demand Saturday service within the existing zone, and making better use of the vehicles during periods of downtime by providing additional shuttle services in areas of low public transport coverage.

Subject to sufficient funding being made available within the period 2026-2029, the Council will undertake trials for new DRT services operating within areas of low public transport coverage including the Malpas area in the south of the borough, the Tarporley area in the centre of the borough and the area to the east of Northwich and Winsford, and north of Middlewich (Swan Green, Allostock, Byley etc).

#### **4.3.7 Network Integration**

Cheshire West and Chester Council will work with operators to implement improved and closer integration of services. This will include further rationalisation and simplification of route numbering to remove duplication, improved co-ordination of timetabling on common corridors of multiple services and with better timetabling to integrate with rail services at local rail hubs.

#### **4.3.8 Events Management**

Cheshire West and Chester Council will develop a borough-wide Events Management Plan in collaboration with operators to ensure that increased pressure on the transport network as a result of planned events can be successfully mitigated and provided for. This will include planning for re-routing of services and ensuring that the impact on journey times as a result of events is minimised as much as possible.

#### **4.3.9 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.

#### **4.3.10 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.

#### **4.3.11 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.

#### **4.3.12 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.

Also subject to sufficient available funding, the Council will provide an update to the existing itravel App to provide a seamless multi-modal travel planning experience and to facilitate ticketing purchase and storage.

#### **4.3.13 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.

#### **4.3.14 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.

#### **4.3.15 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 Blacon Pointer Former Voluntary Quality Partnership**

Under the Enhanced Partnership, Cheshire West and Chester Council will propagate the former voluntary agreement signed between the Council, Arriva, and Stagecoach, in respect of the Blacon Pointer (14/14A/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 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 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, the initial minimum frequencies at which the service is to operate are as follows:
  - **Services 14, 14A**
    - 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. 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 New Services and Service Extensions**

Bus operators will undertake to facilitate trial extension of a number of existing services to be agreed with Cheshire West and Chester Council. These will include additional weekday services, new services on Saturday and Sunday, frequency enhancements and extended hours of operation on core routes.

Subject to a suitable funding, and based on the outputs of the Network Review to be undertaken by Cheshire West and Chester Council, bus operators to explore opportunities to roll out new services in areas of poor or inadequate provision including:

- Winsford/Middlewich – Chester service
- Winsford/ Northwich local services
- Collaboration with Cheshire East and integration with their BSIP to explore cross boundary services between Cheshire West towns and Macclesfield, Congleton, Wilmslow
- Northwich – Runcorn/ Daresbury

## **5.3 Fares Support**

Bus operators will work with Cheshire West and Chester Council model the impact of a borough-wide £1 youth fare cap for 16-18 year olds, and a similar scheme for students. Operators will also participate in a task force and a working group to oversee the project and a trial implementation of the initiative.

Subject to satisfactory modelling outcomes and funding availability in the post 2025/26 financial year period, bus operators will support and participate in the implementation of both youth and student fare schemes for an initial trial period of 1 year. Operators will also support the implementation of a further £1 fare cap for job-seekers and armed service veterans, should a suitable funding and revenue mechanism be agreeable for this.

## **5.4 Ticketing Reform**

Bus operators will work with Cheshire West and Chester Council to agree the principles for a multi-operator ticketing scheme and fare allocation agreement for the A51 Tarvin Road corridor served by the 82, 84, 7 and 8A. This will act as a pilot system for a wider multi-operator ticketing agreement.

Subject to the feasibility study being successful and the agreement being acceptable and accepted by the operators, and subject to suitable funding being made available, operators will participate in a borough-wide multi-operator ticketing scheme identified in a forthcoming study, accepting multi-operator tickets and following agreed rules for reimbursement and remuneration.

## **5.5 Bus Marketing Campaign**

Working with Cheshire West and Chester Council via the EP Working Group, bus operators will undertake to develop a co-ordinated borough-wide bus marketing campaign to properly publicise the improvements proposed as part of the BSIP and to promote sustainable travel across the borough. In particular, a specific target for the campaign will be the concessionary bus market which has declined significantly since

COVID, and increasing the mode share of Park & Ride via discounted travel periods and other promotions.

## **5.6 Network Integration**

Bus operators will work with Cheshire West and Chester Council to implement improved and closer integration of services. This will include further rationalisation and simplification of route numbering to remove duplication, improved co-ordination of timetabling on common corridors of multiple services and with better timetabling to integrate with rail services at local rail hubs.

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.

## **5.7 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 will normally occur within:

- April
- July
- September and
- January

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 the Council 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.

### **5.8 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 and
- Potential ultimate restoration of the 'free at the point of use' nature of the service.

### **5.9 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 are within the scheme.

### **5.10 Vehicles**

Subject to sufficient funding being made available, including via the national ZEBRA scheme or its successor, 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. 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 commercial and supported service vehicles
- Wifi and USB charging on all commercial and 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.

Subject to suitable funding availability, bus operators will implement an enhanced programme of cleaning and maintenance of their vehicles to ensure that litter is not allowed to accumulate, and spills are caught and resolved quickly.

### **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.

Subject to the availability of sufficient funding, bus operators will initiate an Enhanced Driver Training programme to allow them to deal with emergency situations on or off the bus. All drivers will be equipped with ability to contact depot staff and/or emergency services if required.

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 Customer Relations Procedures**

Bus operators will undertake to provide enhanced handling of complaints and customer queries on services they operate (either commercially or under contract). Operators will also maintain direct lines of communication with local Police, schools and other large institutions to provide a mechanism for addressing and resolving any safety concerns that might emerge.

### **5.13 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 in place. This consists 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, , 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, local education providers, 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 has been 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, and Aintree Coachline), and any other professional internal or external staffing support deemed necessary.

EP Working Group meetings are 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, 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 is overseen by an Enhanced Partnership Forum – in which all Operators are entitled to participate and be invited, although attendance by individual Operators is voluntary.

The EP Forum provides 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 comprises the following:

Aintree Coachline	Halton Borough Council
Arriva North West and Wales	Liverpool City Region
Changing Lives Together	Marketing Cheshire
Enterprise Cheshire & Warrington	NHS (including Countess of Cheshire Hospital)
Cheshire East Council	Shropshire County Council
CW&CC – Senior Access Officer	Stagecoach Merseyside and South Lancashire
CW&CC - Economic Growth	Transport Focus
CW&CC - Transport	University of Chester
Chester Zoo	Warrington Borough Council
D&G Buses	Warrington's Own Buses
Flintshire County Council	Wrexham Borough Council

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 is the designated EP Forum AGM. All Operators are 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 take place up to four times per year. EP Forum meetings are arranged and minutes taken by Cheshire West and Chester Council officers. If possible an independent chair will be appointed for this group although, currently, these meetings are chaired by a senior Cheshire West and Chester officer. Meeting length varies according to agenda content but is 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) are 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 are approved at the next EP Forum meeting.

## **6.4 Enhanced Partnership Board**

The EP Board is the decision-making body of the Enhanced Partnership and meets up to four times per year within a fortnight of the EP Forum meeting. Certain decisions of the EP Board may require a statutory Enhanced Partnership Plan Variation – the

process for this is described in Section 5.3.7 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 to represent fully contracted service operators (voting with decision veto)

Board meetings 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 are 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 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 are made by way of a vote through a show of hands from those with voting rights. Decisions are 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 are 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 are able to attend the EP Board meetings as observers but do 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 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 are arranged, chaired and minutes taken by the Council. Meeting length varies according to agenda content but ordinarily is 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 therefore consists 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 – [enhancedpartnership@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:enhancedpartnership@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

enhancedpartnership@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 limits<sup>1</sup>, 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.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See EP Guidance for further background on the statutory objection mechanism

<sup>2</sup> Section 123H(6)-(8) of the Transport Act 2000

# Appendices

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## **A. Cheshire West and Chester Schedule of Existing Bus Services**

**Table Error! No text of specified style in document..1: Cheshire West and Chester – Table of Existing Bus Services – May 24**

No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)		
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun						
1	Chester Station	Rail	Liverpool	Ellesmere Port	2	2	2	2	2	Stagecoach	No			
1	Chester Station	Rail	Wrexham	Chester Park	Business	4	2	4	2	2	Arriva	No	Cross-boundary	
2	Chester Interchange	Bus	Runcorn	Ellesmere Port		2	1	2	1	0	Stagecoach	Partial	De-minimis	Early & evening journeys Mon - Sat
3	Chester		Broughton	Hough Green		1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No		
4/4S	Chester		Mold	Hawarden		2	2	2	2	2	Arriva	No	Cross-boundary	
5	Chester Station	Rail	Wrexham	Huntington		3	1	3	1	1	Stagecoach	Partial	S106	20-minute frequency throughout Mon - Sat. Evening Fri/Sat
5	Ellesmere Port		Mold	Queensferry		1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No	Cross-boundary	
6	Ellesmere Port		Little Sutton	Great Sutton		1.5	0	1.5	0	0	Stagecoach	No		
7	Chester Interchange	Bus	Vicars Cross	Boughton		2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	Partial	De-minimis	30 min frequency Mon-Sat
7	Ellesmere Port		Rivacre	Overpool		2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	Contract	All day Mon - Sat

No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supporte d	Funding type (e.g. contract, de- minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	S u n				
8	Chester Bus Interchange	Piper's Ash	Vicars Cross	0	0	0	0	1	Stagecoach	No		
9	Chester Bus Interchange	Pipers Ash	Hoole Road	2	0	2	0	0	Stagecoach	No		
CAT 9 / 9A	Northwich	Warrington	via Wincham (CAT 9) via Barnton 9A)	1	0	1	0	0	Warrington's Own	Partial	De-minimis	Via Lostock Gralam and Wincham All day Mon - Sat
10	Chester Bus Interchange	Connah's Quay	Queensferry	2	1	2	1	2	Arriva	No		
10A	Chester Bus Interchange	Flint	Queensferry	2	0	2	0	0	Arriva	No		
11	Chester Bus Interchange	Holywell	Broughton	2	0.5	2	0.5	0.5	Arriva	No	Cross-boundary	
14/14 A	Chester Bus Interchange	Blacon	circular	5	0	5	0	3	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	No		
14/14 A	Chester Bus Interchange	Blacon	circular	7	2	7	2	1	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	Partial	De-minimis	Sunday only
15/15 A/15B	Chester Bus Interchange	Saughall	Blacon	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	Yes	Contract/De-minimis	All day / early morning journeys
15/15 A	Chester Bus Interchange	Saughall	Blacon	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	Arriva / Stagecoach / Blacon Pointer VQP	Partial	Contract/De-minimis	Evenings / Sunday only

No.	Between		And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)
					M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun				
16	Chester Bus Interchange		Saltney	Handbridge	3	1	3	1	2	Stagecoach	Partial	De-minimis	Evenings Mon - Fri
22/X2 2	Chester Bus Interchange		West Kirby	Neston	1	0	1	0	0	Al's Coaches	Yes	Contract	All day Mon - Sat
23	Ellesmere Port		Neston	Little Sutton	0.5	0	0	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Yes	Contract	All day Mon - Fri
26/26 A/26B	Ellesmere Port		Guilden Sutton	Chester	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	Contract/De-minimis	All day Mon - Fri / Saturdays
31	Northwich		Crewe	Winsford	1	0	1	0	0	D & G Buses	No		
37	Northwich		Crewe	Winsford	1	1	1	1	0	D & G Buses	No	Cross-boundary	Evenings
40	Chester Station	Rail	Chester	circular	4	0	4	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Partial	De-minimis	Extend span of day - additional journeys Mon - Sun
41/41 B	Chester Station	Rail	Whitchurch	Tattenhall	1	0	1	0	0	Aintree Coachlines	Partial	De-minimis	Fully support part route Mon - Sat
42	Crewe		Congleton	Middlewich	1	0	1	0	0	D & G Buses	No		
48/48 A	Northwich		Frodsham	Kingsley	0.5	0	0	0	0	D & G Buses	Yes	Contract	All day Mon - Fri
49	Rudheath		Weaverham	Northwich	2	0	2	0	0	D & G Buses	Partial	De-minimis	Increase frequency Mon - Sat every 30 mins

No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun				
51	Chester Bus Interchange	Plas Newton	Weston Grove	2	0	2	0	1	Stagecoach	Partial	Contract	Early morning, 6:05pm journey and Evenings only Fri & Sat only
53	Chester Bus Interchange	Kingsway	Hoole Road	4	0	4	0	1	Stagecoach	Partial	Contract	Evenings only Fri & Sat only
61/62	Chester Bus Interchange	Higher Kinnerton	Doddleston	1	0	1	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	Contract	Full day Mon - Fri
70	Nantwich	Tiverton	Spurstow	0L	0	0L	0	0	D & G Buses	No		
82	Chester Bus Interchange	Northwich	Kelsall	1	0	1	0	0	D & G Buses	Partial	Contract	Saturday only
84	Chester Bus Interchange	Crewe	Tarporley	1	1	1	1	0.75	Stagecoach	Partial	Contract	Evenings only Mon - Sat Sunday
89	Northwich	Knutsford	Lostock Gralam	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	D & G Buses	No		
102/103	Ellesmere Port Rail Station	Cheshire Oaks	Ellesmere Port Bus Interchange	0	0	0	0	2	Stagecoach	Yes	S106	Sunday only
204	Chester Station	Rail Deeside Industrial Park	Blacon	0L*	0	0	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	Contract	Mon - Fri only
319	Sandbach	Holmes Chapel	Goostrey	0L	0	0	0	0	D & G Buses	No		



No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)	
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun					
487	Ness Gardens	Liverpool	Neston	2	1	2	1	1	Arriva	Partial	De-minimis	Joint with LCR	
811	Morton	Broughton	Little Sutton and Hooton	0L*	0	0	0	0	Selwyns	No			
N3	Northwich	Moulton	Kingsmead	1	0	0	0	0	Warrington's Own	Yes	Contract	Mon - Fri only	
N4	Northwich	Barnton	Leftwich	1	0	1	0	0	Warrington's Own	Yes	Contract / S106	Mon -Saturday excluding public holidays	
PR1	Chester Bus Interchange	Wrexham Road P&R	Chester Street	Foregate	5	0	5	0	4	Stagecoach	Yes	Contract	Monday -Sunday
PR2	Chester Centre	City Boughton Heath P&R	Chester Street	Foregate	6	0	6	0	4	Stagecoach	Yes	Contract	Monday -Sunday
PR3	Chester Centre	City Upton P&R	Chester Street	Foregate	3	0	3	0	4	Stagecoach	Yes	Contract	Monday -Sunday
T8	Chester Station	Rail	Ruthin	Mold	1	0	1	0	0	M & H Coaches	No		
W7	Winsford Library	Winsford Guildhall	Over St Johns		1	0	0	0	0	Stagecoach	Yes	Contract	Mon - Fri
X1	Chester Bus Interchange	Bus Liverpool	Ellesmere Port		1	0	1	0	1	Stagecoach	No		

No.	Between	And	Via	Daytime buses per hour between 13:00 - 14:00 / Evening buses per hour between 19:00 - 20:00					Operator	CW&C Supported	Funding type (e.g. contract, de-minimis)	Funding time (e.g. all day, evening, weekend)
				M-F Day	M-F Eve	Sat Day	Sat Eve	Sun				
X4	Chester Railway Station	Mold	Buckley	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No		
X30	Chester Bus Interchange	Warrington	Runcorn	1	0	1	0	0	Arriva	No		
X30	Chester Bus Interchange	Frodsham	Mickle Trafford	0	0.5	0	0.5	1	Stagecoach	Yes	Contract Mon-Sat Evening	
<b>Totals</b>				<b>92</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>37</b>				