

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 15 November 2021

Title: Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement Plan

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk – Adam Clapton

Purpose of the Report

To note the Oxfordshire Bus Service Improvement plan updates.

Background

Oxfordshire County Council conducted a consultation earlier this year to help inform a Bus Service Improvement Plan which had to be submitted as part of the Government's National Bus Strategy.

The Town Council formulated a response to this consultation at an extra-ordinary meeting of the Council held on 6th September.

Current Situation

Following the consultation, the County Council submitted its Bus Service Improvement Plan in October 2021 and is awaiting the outcome of the Department for Transport's assessment and what funds it will be awarded under the Strategy.

The full submitted plan for Oxfordshire can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/public-transport/bus-service-improvement-plan>

The Town Council's Independent Parish Transport Representative (PTR), D Miles, has evaluated how the plan affects Witney and has summarised the following points:

1. The revised date for buses to travel along Centenary Way is early 2022 when the road surface has been made suitable. There will be four buses an hour to Carterton and Oxford as well as the town centre and a Sunday service.
2. There will be an ever-increasing frequency in buses from Witney to Oxford. The frequency of up to six buses an hour from West Oxfordshire to Oxford will increase by 2031 to 10 an hour to central Oxford. It is envisaged that there will be two million extra passengers on these buses by this period.
3. This increase in buses will include four services an hour from Eynsham Park and Ride to the Eastern Arc so that it will be much easier to get from Witney to East Oxford.
4. The 64 Carterton to Swindon service will be restored and extended to Witney. This has long been campaigned for and is one of three cross border routes to be restored. There is a considerable amount of guaranteed funding which should interest commercial operators.

One vehicle allocated to Witney and Carterton will go on to Swindon.

5. There will be a much-simplified ticketing system with a countywide ticket and through ticketing the norm. There will be increasing use of technology.
6. Minimum standards will be required for all bus stops and increased use of real time technology. The busier the stop the better the facilities but even minor stops will have hardstanding areas and distinctive pole/ flag together with timetable case units.
7. There will be six new demand response services in the county but only one is planned for West Oxfordshire and this is to connect with Burford not Witney.
8. The current network of Supported Services is guaranteed till 2025 and will be reviewed in 2024. This ensures that the Sunday service on the 233 is guaranteed for the next 3 years.

The new feeder services from Standlake and Long Hanborough to Eynsham will start on 4 January. This will ensure that people in Stanton Harcourt, Northmoor, Bablock Hythe , Freeland and Church Hanborough will be able to get a connecting service to Witney.

The PTR has advised that this is all positive news but has advised caution as the County Council may not receive the funding requested, resulting in some ambitions being scaled back. The Bus Service Improvement Plan is due to start in April 2022.

Environmental impact

There are no environmental impacts to Witney Town Council from the contents of this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications pertaining from this report although the Committee should note point no.6 relating to minimum standards for bus stops.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report.