



***Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for  
Environment (including Transport)***

***Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 2.30 pm  
Committee Room 1, County Hall, New Road, Oxford***

***Items for Decision***

The item for decision under individual Cabinet Members' delegated powers is listed overleaf, with related papers attached.

Copies of the report are circulated (by e-mail) to all members of the County Council.

**These proceedings are open to the public**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne Rees'.

Yvonne Rees  
Chief Executive

March 2020

Committee Officer: **Graham Warrington**  
Tel: 07393 001211; E-Mail:  
[graham.warrington@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:graham.warrington@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Note: Date of next meeting: 26 March 2020

**If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named on the front page, but please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.**

## Items for Decision

1. **Declarations of Interest**
2. **Questions from County Councillors**

Any county councillor may, by giving notice to the Proper Officer by 9 am two working days before the meeting, ask a question on any matter in respect of the Cabinet Member's delegated powers.

The number of questions which may be asked by any councillor at any one meeting is limited to two (or one question with notice and a supplementary question at the meeting) and the time for questions will be limited to 30 minutes in total. As with questions at Council, any questions which remain unanswered at the end of this item will receive a written response.

Questions submitted prior to the agenda being despatched are shown below and will be the subject of a response from the appropriate Cabinet Member or such other councillor or officer as is determined by the Cabinet Member, and shall not be the subject of further debate at this meeting. Questions received after the despatch of the agenda, but before the deadline, will be shown on the Schedule of Addenda circulated at the meeting, together with any written response which is available at that time.

3. **Petitions and Public Address**
4. **Supported Bus Services Fund** (Pages 1 - 12)

*Forward Plan Ref: 2020/045*

*Contact: Dave Harrison, Senior Public Transport Planner Tel: 07901 331751*

Report by Director of Planning & Place (**CMDE4**).

The report provides an outline of the Government's recently announced Supported Bus Services Fund, Oxfordshire's allocation from that fund for spending in 2020/21 and a Statement of Intent for submission to the Department for Transport which sets out how Oxfordshire's allocation will be spent.

***The Cabinet Member for Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the Statement of Intent for the spending of Oxfordshire's allocation of the Supported Bus Services fund, for submission to the Department for Transport on 13 March 2020.***

### **Exemption from Call-in**

Under Standing Orders (Section 6.2, paragraph 19 (a) to (c) the Chairman of the Council has agreed that a decision on the proposed Supported Bus Services Fund, which would normally be subject to call-in, should be exempt from that process. That allows the County Council to meet a Statement of Intent deadline of 13 March, which if the usual scrutiny process were invoked could not be met and, therefore, would prejudice both the Council's and public interest.

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Division(s): ALL

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT – 12 MARCH 2020**

### **SUPPORTED BUS SERVICES FUND**

**Report by Director for Planning & Place**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Cabinet Member for Environment is RECOMMENDED to approve the Statement of Intent for the spending of Oxfordshire's allocation of the Supported Bus Services fund, for submission to the Department for Transport on 13 March 2020.**

#### **Executive Summary**

2. In February 2020 the Government announced a number of new funds for the provision of bus services, including a new Supported Bus Services Fund for use in the 2020/21 financial year. Oxfordshire County Council has been allocated £588,403 of that fund for use on the supported bus network in 2020/21.

#### **Introduction**

3. In February 2020, the Government announced a number of new funds for the provision of bus services, including a new Supported Bus Services Fund (SBSF) for use in the 2020/21 financial year.
4. Subject to submission of a satisfactory Statement of Intent (Sol), Oxfordshire County Council has been allocated £588,403 of that fund.
5. Consultation has been undertaken with Parish Transport Representatives, Bus Users Oxford and Oxfordshire MPs.
6. The Cabinet Member for Environment is asked to approve the Sol at Annex 1, taking account of any further significant information or responses from consultation received subsequent to the preparation of this report.
7. The County Council has not held a budget for supported bus services since the withdrawal of funds from 118 bus routes in July 2016. Of these routes, 48 remain in existence through commercial operation, community transport provision or Section 106 from planning obligations.

#### **Background**

8. The SBSF is available in 2020/21 for local authorities as revenue support to help provide more bus services in their area. The Government expects the

funding to be used to improve the provision of local bus services in one or more of the following ways:

- restore lost services where most needed;
  - improve current services; and/or
  - support new services or extensions
9. In the absence of an existing bus services budget in Oxfordshire, there has been a high level of interest in these funds amongst parish transport representatives, the general public and local transport operators.
  10. Whilst welcome, it should be noted that the SBSF represents a small proportion of the Council's previous budget for bus services.
  11. As is set out in the guidance accompanying the funding announcement, Government intends that the funds are wholly spent in 2020/21, although there is recognition that authorities may need to spend a proportion of it in the subsequent year.
  12. Also set out in the guidance is that Government reserves the right to withhold funds, both in 2020/21 and in future financial years, from local authorities where it does not feel the funds are proposed for use on appropriate projects.

### **Consultation**

13. It is a requirement of the SBSF that local authorities consult their local MPs and also demonstrate proportionate engagement with the public.
14. Officers are awaiting feedback from consultation with Oxfordshire MPs and, where received, will report this verbally at the Cabinet Member for Environment Delegated Decisions meeting.
15. Consultation with the public has been undertaken through the county's network of Parish Transport Representatives on 25 February 2020. The group was briefed on the SBSF, its eligibility criteria and the timeframes involved, and invited to give their views on how the fund should be used.
16. Officers have also sought the views of the Oxfordshire bus users' group.
17. Due to the interest surrounding the funds and their potential use, the Council has undertaken an initial assessment and evaluated various options to meet the criteria.
18. Officers have sought engagement with other local authorities to identify their proposed uses of the fund. Discussions with Hampshire, Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire and East Sussex have identified that their priorities are likely to be the improvement of current services and 'pump-priming' specific enhancements where more strategic gaps in the network exist. We also have intelligence from Derbyshire and Central Bedfordshire that this approach is preferred.

19. The Council is required to publish how they intend to use the funding (excluding any commercially sensitive information) within one month of it being provided in April 2020. The Council must also publish, at the end of each financial year in which the money was spent, what proportion of the funds were utilised and what for.

**Statement of Intent (Sol)**

20. The Council is required to submit a Sol showing how the SBSF will be used and demonstrating that it will meet the needs of local people and stakeholders.
21. The Sol will allow the Government to ensure that the objectives of the funding are achieved, assess the impact of the funding and use the findings to inform the development of the National Bus Strategy for England and associated long-term funding settlement.
22. Officers have prepared the Sol at Annex 1, taking account of consultation undertaken at the time of writing this report and the likely costs of providing the services.
23. As set out in Annex 1, the council intends to use the fund in the following way:
- £125,000 to improve supported bus services, which is expected to provide 77,935 additional bus miles.
  - £253,400 to restore lost bus routes, which is expected to provide 87,000 additional bus miles.
  - £210,000 to support extensions to existing bus services, which is expected to provide 89,600 additional bus miles.
24. As stated above, consultation is also being undertaken with Oxfordshire MPs and this will be reported verbally at the Cabinet Member for Environment Delegated Decisions meeting.

**Next Steps**

25. The timetable for immediate next steps is as follows:

Submission of Statement of Intent to the Department for Transport	13 March 2020
Response expected from Department of Transport	By 30 March 2020
Funding provided to local authorities who meet the funding requirements	From 1 April 2020

## **Financial and Staff Implications**

26. The total sum of £588,403 will be provided by the Department for Transport by 1 April 2020, provided that a satisfactory Sol is received by 13 March 2020. There are no implications for the Council's budget.
27. It is expected that all the money to be spent. Costs of services are based on officers best estimates and are subject to change as a result of procurement of the services. If appropriate, a contract may be let whereby part of the contract cost is met by SBSF and the remainder by Section 106 funds in order to exhaust the full allocated sum.
28. Should further funding not be forthcoming, and where commercial viability is not secured, services would be withdrawn after contract expiry (1 year from introduction).
29. Failure to spend the funds on appropriate projects may lead to a reduced future funding allocation for supported bus services.

## **Sustainability Implications**

30. It is hoped that the spending of the SBSF on supported bus services will help to encourage more travel by bus, thereby reducing traffic and congestion. Fewer vehicles on the road would reduce traffic emissions, contributing to better air quality and reducing the impact on climate change.

## **Equalities Implications**

31. The fund will be used to improve access to services for rural communities. It is not considered that any protected groups would be disadvantaged by the proposals.

## **Risk Management**

32. The principal risks associated with these funds are:
  - delayed service introduction may lead to a reduced 2020/21 funding allocation;
  - improper use of the funds, or delayed introduction, could lead to a reduced future funding allocation under the National Bus Strategy, limiting the Council's ability to improve rural connectivity in the medium to long term;
  - bus operators may see the funds as an opportunity to withdraw commercially weak services;
  - there may be negative commentary regarding the choices that are made for service improvement;
  - expectations may be raised around the continued running of services over and above the one-year time period for which the funding is intended; and



- long term funds may not materialise, leading to service withdrawal after one year's operation and/or pressure to maintain routes using other sources of funds.

33. It is considered that these risks can be minimised by:

- moving swiftly to procure services using the funds;
- ensuring that all funds are utilised on services which meet the eligibility criteria, and that such funds are spent in the earliest possible timeframe;
- working with operators to boost use of commercially weak services;
- prioritising the use of the funding allocation in as consistent a manner as possible;
- providing clear communications around the timescales associated with the funding and that services may cease after one year; and
- ensuring that communities benefiting from the funds are aware of the current short-term funding position.

SUE HALLIWELL  
Director for Planning & Place

Background papers: Department for Transport, Funding for Supported Bus Services in 2020-21

Contact Officers: Dave Harrison, Senior Public Transport Officer 07901 331751  
Joanne Fellows, Infrastructure Locality Lead 07990 368897

March 2020

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# Statement of intent form

## Section A: Contacts

### 1. What is your local authority name?

Oxfordshire County Council

Yes

### 2. Name and contact details of the reporting officer:

Dave Harrison, Senior Public Transport Planner  
Email: [dave.harrison@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:dave.harrison@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 07901331751

## Section B: Funding Requirements

### 3. What do you intend to use your funding allocation for? Tick as many as applicable.

- Yes A. Improve current supported bus services  
Yes B. Restore lost bus services  
Yes C. Support new bus services or extensions to current bus services  
D. Other

If you ticked A, please provide details of how much of, and how, your funding allocation will be used to improve current supported services:

The County Council intend to use £125,000 of the fund to improve supported bus services as follows:

- additional peak hour services on service 136 between RAF Benson and Wallingford
- a new Sunday service on route 488 between Banbury and Chipping Norton
- a new Sunday service on route 11 between Watlington and Oxford
- a new Sunday service on route 233 between Woodstock and Witney, including key links to the rail network at Hanborough station

We expect this element of the fund to contribute 77,935 additional bus miles over the year of operation, 45,460 of which will be within the financial year 2020/21.

The above is subject to receipt of acceptable tender prices.

If you ticked B, please provide details of how much of, and how, your funding allocation will be used to restore lost services:

The County Council intend to use £253,400 of the fund to restore lost bus routes as follows:

- reinstatement of a former peak hour rail link service (formerly X8) between Chipping Norton and Kingham station
- reinstatement of a broadly two hourly service (formerly 63) between Southmoor and Oxford via several villages remote from a main bus service
- reinstatement of a broadly two hourly bus service (formerly T2) between Abingdon, Berinsfield and Cowley, connecting two major science centres. We expect to be able to further build on this service with developer funds

We expect this element of the fund to contribute 87,000 additional bus miles over the year of operation, 50,750 of which will be within the financial year 2020/21.

The above is subject to receipt of acceptable tender prices.

If you ticked C, please provide details of how much of, and how, your funding allocation will be used to support new services or extensions to current services:

The County Council intend to use £210,000 of the fund to support extensions to current services as follows:

- supporting another authority to retain service 47 to an isolated village between Lambourn and Swindon. Without this funding the service will no longer serve Oxfordshire
- evening services on route S4 between Oxford and Banbury
- a new Sunday service on route X38 between Wallingford and Henley (which will be combined with some developer funds we have to extend the service to/from Oxford)
- improvement of Saturday services on route X9 between Chipping Norton, Charlbury and Witney
- a new Sunday service on route 40 between Thame, Chinnor and Stokenchurch, which is an extension of an existing service to/from High Wycombe

We expect this element of the fund to contribute 89,600 additional bus miles over the year of operation, 52,266 of which will be within the financial year 2020/21.

The above is subject to receipt of acceptable tender prices.

If you ticked D, please provide details of how much of, and how, your funding allocation will be used for other purposes:

n/a

**4. Provide details of the duration you will use the funding for, including whether this applies to all of your responses to Question 3.**

We intend to use all the funds, regardless of service category supported, within a period of one year between September 2020 and August 2021. This meets the Department's ambition of expenditure being fully utilised within one year.

Oxfordshire County Council has worked quickly to incorporate services provided through the Fund into an existing tender programme which is being published in early April for implementation in September 2020. The Council is required to competitively tender all services supported with the Fund. Contracts will be issued for a one-year duration, with an optional additional year if the National Bus Strategy identifies further funds for supported bus services.

Therefore, the funds are being spent in the shortest possible timeframe available to the Council.

**5. Provide a statement on how your plans will meet the needs of local communities.**

This should include:

- how you have considered the needs of local residents;
- how you have consulted local MPs;
- how the views of local residents have influenced your funding decisions (proportionate to the quantum of funding you are to receive); and
- the extent to which your plans meets the aspirations of local MPs.

*Consultation has taken place with local parish representatives, the local bus users' group, local MPs and the main bus operators. Some Councillors, members of the public and community transport operators also contacted the Council directly.*

*A quarterly meeting of Parish Transport Representatives (PTRs) took place on 25 February 2020. Each of the 317 parishes in Oxfordshire is entitled to nominate a representative to such meetings, which discuss several topics but particularly public transport (given their former history as consultees to the bus subsidy budget).*

*Delegates were made aware of the Fund and invited to submit representations to relevant officers. Several provided verbal representations immediately after the meeting, whilst a further four have been subsequently received by email. Several members of the public who had obtained details of the Fund also contacted the Council directly via online forms or their local Councillors/MPs office.*

*Consultation took place with the local bus users' group, Bus Users Oxford, who provided extensive comments on their priorities.*

*The following MPs were sent a letter from the Leader of the Council on 2 March 2020 inviting them for their views: Robert Courts (Witney), Annaliese Dodds (Oxford East), John Howell (Henley), David Johnston (Wantage), Layla Moran (Oxford West & Abingdon) and Victoria Prentis (Banbury).*

*Both major bus operators in Oxfordshire submitted representations as to services they considered were appropriate for use of the Fund. Two community transport operators also made comments on services they wished to be considered for funding.*

*The services which have been selected were included in requests from four PTRs, a local Councillor, both bus operators and the local bus user group.*

Did this involve consulting any of the following groups?

Yes, to the following groups:

- A. Local bus users
- B. Local residents who do not use the bus
- C. Bus operator(s)
- D. All current local MP(s)
- E. Other (Please describe here):

Parish Transport Representatives, some of whom represent communities who are not currently served by bus routes following reductions to services which took place in 2016.

**6. Confirm that you will be publishing information on your website, within one month of receipt of funding, on how your funding allocation will be used.**

Yes

If no, why not?

**7. Confirm that you will be publishing information on your website as soon as possible after the end of the 2020-21 financial year on how your funding allocation was used.**

Yes

If no, why not?

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