



Borough of Telford and Wrekin

Cabinet

Thursday 16 July 2026

Better Buses in Telford & Wrekin - Update

Cabinet Member:	Cllr Ollie Vickers - Cabinet Member: Jobs, Transport & Digital Connectivity	
Lead Director:	Dean Sargeant – Director: Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services	
Service Area:	Neighbourhood Enforcement	
Report Author:	Matt Powell – Head of Service: Strategic Transport & Highway Network Management	
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Wards Affected:	All Wards	
Key Decision:	Not Key Decision	
Forward Plan:	18 June 2026	
Report considered by:	SMT – 16 June 2026	
	Business Briefing – 25 June 2026	
	Cabinet – 16 July 2026	

1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 1.1 Note the continued improvements in bus travel and connectivity across Telford and Wrekin over the last two years that comprises:
- The provision of six new bus routes, that have now completed 1million passenger trips
 - £2 fare cap across the borough (£1 for under 19's) as part of the Council's wider commitment to provide cost of living support to our residents
 - Infrastructure improvements including new bus shelters

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- Improved journey experience through development of the 'Citymapper' app
- Introduction and expansion of the Travel Telford 'On Demand' bus network
- Delivery of two electric buses

1.2 Note the continued investment in our bus network made possible by recent government funding, Council investment and user of developer funding to bring forward improvements.

1.3 Delegate authority to the Director Neighbourhood & Enforcement Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Transport & Digital Connectivity to take necessary steps to continue to evolve the bus network in Telford and Wrekin. In doing so, ensure the evolution continues to be founded on resident and user feedback to ensure affordable, reliable and well connected bus services are bought forward.

1.4 Delegate authority to Director: Policy & Governance to execute any legal documentation required to facilitate and implement the recommendations within this report.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update on the council's continued focus on improving bus travel and connectivity across Telford and Wrekin while seeking approval to procure and develop new bus services (where required) to ensure the bus network remains fit for the future.

3.0 Background

3.1 Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to providing a better-connected and affordable bus network, linking residential, leisure and employment sites in line with the Councils Vision for 2032. Well-connected transport links borough towns with key education, employment and shopping destinations while helping to ease congestion and reduce carbon emissions.

3.2 In 2021, The National Bus Strategy for England was published and sought to transform the quality of bus services across the country. In 2024 government committed to providing greater powers locally for bus services; as transport authority, the council has a pivotal role in bringing forward positive change to the bus network. This change is underpinned through the council's commitment to partnership working.

3.3 Cabinet at their October 2021 meeting approved the creation of an Enhanced Partnership; at the same meeting, Cabinet received an update on the development of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) as required by the National Bus Strategy. Telford and Wrekin entered into an Enhanced Partnership on 1st April 2022 that seeks to bring together the council, bus operators and user groups with a focus on increasing patronage, improving services and delivering transformation.

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- 3.4 The Bus Service Improvement Plan sets the vision for the bus network in the borough, it is updated in line with the Department for Transport (DfT) guidelines and timescales and published on the council's website.
- 3.5 Within the Bus Service Improvement Plan, the council has prioritised developing an affordable, reliable and well-connected bus network. To deliver on these priorities, the following commitments have been made:
- Introduction of £2 fare scheme – complete
 - Introduction of improved journey time planning services via Citymapper – complete
 - Continued evolution of Travel Telford Bus Services – ongoing
 - Delivery of Bus Shelter improvements/infrastructure – over 90 installed to date with more planned
 - UK's first off-grid bus station (recognised with a DfT Excellence Award)
 - Real time travel information - screens installed with more planned
 - Implementation of EV fleet - ongoing
- 3.6 Bus services in the borough are currently operated in two ways, firstly on a commercial basis by private bus operator(s) and secondly under contract to the Council as a supported bus service(s). With the commercial network, the Council works with private operators to drive continuous performance and improvement but has no direct control over the services. However, with the supported network the council has increased control through contractual management processes.
- 3.7 In delivering on the vision and commitments outlined within the Bus Service Improvement Plan, in 2022 the council undertook detailed engagement with residents to understand the challenges and barriers regarding bus travel. At the time, the survey informed the design of new bus routes which largely focused on improving connections from residential areas to employment, health and education, providing connections in rural areas and delivering affordable reliable services.
- 3.8 On analysis of the survey information, the council brought forward six new bus routes with the first launching in December 2022. Starting with the 100 (known locally as the work express) this efficient route connects residential areas including Sutton Hill, Woodside and Brookside with employment sites at Hortonwood, Halesfield and Stafford Park. Operating from 5am to 11pm seven days a week, this service currently averages 13,800 passenger trips a month and continues to grow. The other five services improve connectivity in rural areas linking Newport and Wellington as well as urban services linking Lawley/Lightmoor with the Town Centre and Wellington.
- 3.9 If the council had not taken action in 2022 and delivered new routes as outlined, large areas of the borough would have seen a loss or reduction of bus routes. This would have resulted in much of the urban area outside of the main borough towns and areas of south Telford along with the entire rural area to the north of the borough would have had no bus services. As a result of route development and investment by the council, the council replaced older failing routes with new routes

designed with communities and passengers in mind to improve connectivity and reliability of bus services across the borough.

- 3.10 Since launch, these six services have now completed over 1,000,000 passenger trips.
- 3.11 Cabinet will recall at their January 2025 meeting, approval was given to secure the provision of new services from July 2025 onwards. Following a bus network review, in July 2025 the six services were re-tendered. These reconfigured services were codeveloped with using feedback from residents and knowledge of the effectiveness of the services to date.
- 3.12 Since July 2025, the new services have completed over 350,000 passenger trips compared to 290,000 trips during the corresponding period a year before. This represents a 21% increase in patronage and is a clear demonstration of the continued growth in bus travel and the councils commitment to improving connectivity and service reliability for residents.
- 3.13 From the start in 2022, the Travel Telford bus routes were developed with a fare structure of £2 for adult and £1 for child per journey. In May 2026, this fare cap was extended to all bus routes that start and end in the borough. This fare structure now places bus travel in Telford and Wrekin among the most affordable in the country as part of the Council's wider commitment to provide cost of living support to our residents.
- 3.14 The Council continues to consider future schemes to support our residents, and are currently considering options around a potential future scheme to support travel for care leavers.
- 3.15 Resident feedback confirms that reliable and up to date information on bus services is very important. This has directly informed the investment into on-street real-time information screens at key locations along with the roll out of the Citymapper app. The Citymapper app allows users to obtain specific real-time information on the journeys wherever they are and has so far seen 2045 users sign up. The council continues to promote the use of the app with plans being developed to provide more information on how to access it at bus stops.
- 3.16 The council continues to work with bus operators and partners to improve safety on buses as well as routes to bus stops. To date, this has comprised mandatory fitting of CCTV on all vehicles, regular police patrols on routes and street lighting improvements on walking routes. This focus supports the council's commitment to tackling violence against women and girls (VAWG).
- 3.17 To add to the existing bus network, the council launched the On Demand bus service in The Gorge Parish area in early 2025. Initially operating as a pilot, this travel offer provides transport links across the Gorge into Madeley and the Town Centre. The On Demand service continues to expand and now operates in Horsehay and Lightmoor, and most recently Telford College. Further expansion is planned along with increasing awareness of this affordable and flexible service.

- 3.18 This year, the park and ride service for Ironbridge Gorge has been expanded to provide links to other destinations in the borough from July through to September. Starting in July the new summer bus service trial will operate to make it easier for residents and visitors to travel between Ironbridge Gorge, Wellington and The Wrekin. The new service will operate during weekends and Bank Holiday Monday providing affordable links between visitor destinations as well as providing free parking at the Ironbridge Gorge park and ride.
- 3.19 Going forward, the council will continue to evolve the bus network across the borough to improve connectivity and confidence in bus travel. The council will continue to explore options for evening and night time services.

4.0 Summary of main proposals

- 4.1 The council has developed and delivered six new bus routes across the borough. These new routes have completed over 1,000,000 passenger trips since launch in December 2022 with fares capped at £2 for an adult and £1 for under 19s which is now among the lowest cost in the country.
- 4.2 Provision of the new services have been underpinned by resident survey's that were undertaken in 2021, 2022 and November 2024.
- 4.3 The Council continues to enhance and evolve the bus network across Telford and Wrekin that will be founded on resident feedback and data.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The council is committed to delivering affordable reliable public transport for residents and businesses.
- 5.2 The Bus Services Act 2017 formerly prohibited the council from establishing its own bus company.
- 5.3 The council could choose not to continue new bus services, but this would result in the market only providing routes that are commercially viable. Not only would this reduce connectivity and productivity it would be preclude the provision of much needed services that do not provide a commercial return and leave a significant portion of the Borough without bus services.

6.0 Key Risks

- 6.1 There is a risk that current government funding structures could change. Should this occur, the council will explore options to maximise service provision within available budgets while seeking opportunity to secure external funding where possible e.g. through planning/developer contributions.

7.0 Council Priorities

- 7.1 Maintaining and procuring of new bus services supports the following priorities:
- Every child, young person, and adult lives well in their community.
 - All neighbourhoods are a great place to live; and

- Our natural environment is protected – we take a leading role in addressing the climate emergency.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The bus services detailed in this report continue to be funded through a combination of Government grant, developer contributions (Section 106) and existing budgets.
- 8.2 A multi-year allocation of Local Authority Bus Grant was announced in December 2025. A total of £5,047,995 of revenue funding has been allocated for the period 2026 to 2029, which will support the continuation of the bus services set out in this report.
- 8.3 In addition, £6,784,510 of capital funding has been allocated for the period 2026 to 2030. This funding will support investment in infrastructure improvements as outlined within the Bus Service Improvement Plan, including enhancements to bus stops, passenger information systems, and low-emission vehicles.
- 8.4 Whilst the confirmation of multi-year funding provides greater short- to medium-term certainty, there remains no confirmed revenue funding beyond 2029. As such, the longer-term sustainability of these services will require further consideration. The costs of maintaining and, where appropriate, extending bus services beyond 2029/2030 will need to be assessed alongside future funding opportunities, with any ongoing financial implications considered as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

9.0 Legal and HR Implications

- 9.1 The Bus Services Act 2017 formerly prohibited local authorities from establishing their own bus companies. This position has now changed with the passing of the Bus Services Act 2025 in October 2025 and specifically s.22.
- 9.2 If required, the council will procure new bus services in accordance with the contract procedure rules and applicable procurement legislation.
- 9.3 There are no HR implications arising from this report or the recommendations.

10.0 Ward Implications

- 10.1 This report impacts on all wards of the borough.

11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications

- 11.1 Effective and efficient transport network provides the ability for independent travel. Bus travel reduces social isolation and connects communities from rural and urban residential areas with key education and employment destinations, as well as links to the Princess Royal Hospital.
- 11.2 Since 2022 the council operated bus routes have supported over 1,000,000 passenger trips; procurement of new routes will continue to support connectivity across the borough.

12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12.1 Buses improve connectivity and access for all, and maintaining good coverage across the borough supports this. Infrastructure such as bus stops and service information also support accessibility.
- 12.2 The £2 fare cap scheme further encourages accessibility to more people, combined with the continued operation of the English National Concessionary Fare Scheme for eligible users.

13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications

- 13.1 Transport biggest carbon contributor in the borough. Per individual passenger, the average car emits 54% more tonnes of carbon dioxide when compared to the average bus. An effective and efficient bus network will support the council's plan to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- 13.2 To support the development of the new routes over the last two years, the council has installed 100 new bus shelters across the borough. These bus shelters are made from recycled plastic and in most cases use solar or wind to power lights and customer information screens. Use of this equipment saw Wellington bus station as the UK's first off grid bus station installed during 2022 which has received recognition nationally. The council will continue to install recycled shelters as part of the continued investment into improving bus travel across the borough.
- 13.3 The council has procured two electric buses that will go into service in the coming months once commissioned. The council will continue to explore the use of EV buses where appropriate and affordable. In the meantime, the council will continue to specify the latest emission standard vehicles to minimise the environmental impact and carbon emissions of their operations.

14.0 Background Papers

Bus Service Improvement Plan – [Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\) - Telford & Wrekin Council](#)

Better Buses in Telford and Wrekin – 6 January 2025 Cabinet Report

15.0 Appendices

None

16.0 Report Sign Off

Signed off by	Date sent	Date signed off	Initials
Legal	11/06/26	16/06/2026	ON
Finance	11/06/26	19/06/2026	PT
Director	05/06/26	19/06/2026	DRS