

OFFICER DECISION NOTICE



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This notice is to be used for the following types of officer decisions. (Select one option).

- A.** Decisions taken by officers under a specific express delegation from Council or a Committee.
- B.** Decisions taken by officers under a general delegation from Council or a Committee, which relates to (i) a permission or a licence, or (ii) the rights of an individual, or (iii) a contract or expenditure over which materially affects that relevant local government body's financial position.

1. Title of decision:	Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) – Revenue Package
2. Date of the decision:	04 December 2025
3. The decision maker:	Acting Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection.

4. Decision details:

1. To deliver the following enhancements, working with bus operators, in accordance with the approved BSIP 2024 Strategy Update and BSIP 2025 Delivery Plan:
 - a. To vary and enhance the existing bus service contract with Reading Transport Limited, for the provision of Buzz 18 services between Tilehurst and Kenavon Drive via Kentwood Hill, Portman Road and central Reading.
 - b. To vary and enhance the existing Buzz 9 bus service contract with Reading Transport Limited, to include an evening service to Royal Berkshire Hospital.
 - c. To enter into an agreement with Reading Transport Limited, to provide Sunday Bus Services between MereOak Park and Ride and Reading Town Centre, serving both Green Park Village and Kennet Island.
 - d. To provide a subsidised Park and Ride bus ticket until 31 March 2026 (or the nearest period end date, relative to bus operators, 4 week operating periods).
 - e. To enter into an agreement with Oxford Bus Company to provide evening bus services on the X40.

5. Reasons for the decision:

In June 2024 the Council submitted its revised Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to DfT, endorsed by the Councils Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee on 27th June 2024.

In February 2025, DfT confirmed to the Council its grant funding allocations for 2025-2026, with the Council being awarded a further £2.4m, and requested that delivery plans be developed, setting out how the funding would be spent in year.

Officers, working alongside members of the Enhanced Partnership (Reading Transport Ltd and Oxford Bus Company), worked collectively to review and develop proposals that would deliver the most significant growth and service improvement for passengers, across the network. This resulted in a delivery plan being proposed, which set out various capital and revenue schemes to be delivered during 2025-26.

All proposals were funded solely through the BSIP 2025-26 funding allocation, and built upon the existing BSIP allocations from 2022-2025.

Further details supporting each of the decisions can be found below:

Enhancement of Buzz 18

Buzz 18 was first introduced on Tuesday, April 2nd 2024 and replaced the Council's existing contracted Buzz 42 bus service. The updated route offered a new service from Kenavon Drive and central Reading to Tilehurst Triangle delivering a missing link in the network as well as providing socially necessary services. This new service enabled access to locations currently not served by RTL, such as River Academy, Rivermead Leisure Complex and access to businesses on Portman Road. This also reinstated services to Kentwood hill, providing access to public transport, which had been lost for several years, unlocking new opportunities for public transport growth.

Since its introduction the Buzz 18 service has seen significant growth. In March 2024, Patronage on the Buzz 42 was 4731, with this increasing to 9080 in April 2024 (the first month of the Buzz 18 extension to Tilehurst). Since April 2024, patronage had grown to 14150 in August 2025 (55% increase).

To stimulate further growth and accommodate the increasing use of the service, and with particular attention the new intake of students to River Academy, an additional bus was added to the service in September 2025, increasing the frequency to 30mins (Mon-Fri).

Since the introduction of the enhanced services in September 2025, patronage has grown to 21034 (48% increase).

In total, between March 2024 and September 2025, the Buzz 42/18 patronage has grown by 345%.

Continuing to support and stimulate growth of new bus services, is a key function of the Councils BSIP, and provides services that otherwise would not be launched, an opportunity to develop so that they can be commercially viable in the future.

The overarching contract is due to expire in March 2027, with this further enhanced element of the services due to expire in September 2026.

Enhancement of Buzz 9

The BSIP allowed the Council to save the Route 9 service, which was due to be cut by Reading Transport Ltd in 2022. In Feb 2024 the Council awarded a new Contract to RTL to run provide medium term security for this important bus service, which provides links between South Reading, Reading University and the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Since becoming a contracted bus service in April 2024, the Buzz 9 service has maintained a good level of patronage ranging between 13000-15000 passengers per month.

In May 2025, the Buzz 9 was enhanced to introduce an evening service, which would interwork with improvements being made by colleagues in Wokingham Borough Council to the Leopard 3.

The new hourly evening service on the 9 was designed to not only retain a 30-minute evening service between Reading and the RBH, but also enhance the evening service along Shinfield Road, and provide a new evening link from the Hospital to Whitley Wood that strengthens the usability of the BSIP-funded daytime service.

The overarching contract is due to expire in March 2027, with this enhanced services due to expire in May 2026, unless suitable funding becomes available to extend this.

Enhancement of X40

Following the receipt of our Grant Award from DfT, Oxford Bus Company made a proposal to the Council to enhance its x40 service, to introduce an evening service between Reading and Oxford.

Although this service is not directly managed by the Council, but rather is a grant to support continued growth in services, it was included within the proposed BSIP Delivery Plan, which was subsequently approved by the EP Board.

Kennet Island / Green Park Village Sunday Bus Service

Since December 2023, the Council has been running a de-minimus bus service contract for Sunday services between MereOak P&R and Reading Town Centre, via Green Park Village.

In September 2025, RTL removed its Sunday Service to Kennet Island, as well as making significant reductions to its Mon-Fri services. In October 2025 Officers were made aware of RTLs intention to remove its Kennet Island services altogether as these were no longer commercially viable. Since then, Officers have been working alongside RTL to develop proposals to maintain a level of service to Kennet Island Mon-Sun.

RTL will continue to serve Kennet Island Mon-Sat by diverting its Route 50 services via Kennet Island, whilst the Council will intervene, utilising BSIP funding to provide services on Sunday. The new services will work alongside the 650 service already in operation (contracted by the Council) and will mirror Mon-Sat services.

Whilst available BSIP funding at the current time is only able to subsidise these services through 31 December 2026, it is hoped that retaining this service, and interworking it with existing services, will help stimulate growth and make it more commercially viable for the future.

Park and Ride Fares subsidy

As part of the Councils Local Transport Plan, we have a long-term ambition to support Park and Ride sites and services, with a view to generating growth and reducing unnecessary traffic on Reading Roads.

In 2024, to complement the Councils BSIP Bus Lanes, the Council introduced a significantly subsidised P&R to stimulate growth. This scheme started as a £1 fare (including parking), which was then increased to £2.50 in June 2025, and is due to be increased to £3.50 from

January 2026. This stepped approach allows for initial behavioural change to take place, whilst encouraging passenger retention by not increasing fares in one go.

During the £1 fare offer, we saw passenger growth across all P&R sites, increase from 3000 to 6700 passengers per month. Although there was an initial drop following the increase to £2.50, passenger numbers have now recovered to approx 5400 per month, which demonstrates the projected passenger retention.

Subject to further funding becoming available, opportunities to extend reduced park & ride fares beyond March 2026 will be investigated.

6. Alternative options considered (if any) and rejected:

Various other service enhancements/new services and ticketing schemes were considered during the development of the BSIP delivery plan, however it was agreed that the enhancements presented in the final plan, and which these decisions relate, offered the best value and largest benefit to support continued passenger growth.

7. List of open Background Papers:

None.

8. List of confidential or exempt Background Papers:

None.

9. Any other matters taken into consideration:

<input type="checkbox"/> Legitimate expectation of consultation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Procedural requirements
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Health implications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Environmental or Climate Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Management implications
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transparency of Information (FOI etc)	<input type="checkbox"/> Privacy Impact Assessments
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights Act Duties	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equality Impact Assessment
<input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Safety
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regulatory duties	<input type="checkbox"/> EU withdrawal
<input type="checkbox"/> Armed Forces Covenant	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

Details of the matters taken into account:

Not applicable.

10. Legal considerations

Advice has been sought from the Councils procurement team, who have confirmed that the variation to the existing contract can be made, in accordance with the terms and conditions of contract, and the councils procurement rules.

The Council will need to vary the existing Contracts for Buzz 9 / 18. Legal have already been informed and have drafted the necessary documentation for approval.

The Council will need to enter into new contracts or funding agreements for Kennet Island Sunday Services, and grant award to Oxford Bus for X40.

11. Financial considerations

All expenditure relating to this decision is to be funded through the Councils BSIP Revenue Grant. At 1 November 2025, the remaining BSIP Revenue Grant totalled £2.7m. All of the schemes subject to this decision have individual budget lines assigned to them and are not expected to overspend.

Buzz 18

The current contract for Buzz 18 service is £433k p/a, with the enhancement costing a further £276k (for 12months). The cost of these services is funded predominantly through BSIP, as well as s106 contributions associated with the Kenavon Drive development.

At 1/11/2025, £815k (BSIP Funding) remains allocated to delivering Buzz 18 Services. This is in addition to £246k of s106 funding and £74k of BSOG grant. **(total allocated £1.135m)**

Remaining Contract Cost 25/26 - £100k

Enhancement cost remaining (Nov – September) £223k

Contract Cost 26/27 – £432k

Total expenditure - £755k

Buzz 9

The current contract for Buzz 9 service is £478k p/a, with the enhancement costing a further £50k (for 12months). The cost of these services is funded predominantly through BSIP.

At 1/11/2025, £734k (BSIP Funding) remains allocated to delivering Buzz 9 Services. This is in addition to £74k of BSOG grant. **(total allocated £808k)**

Remaining Contract Cost 25/26 - £110k

Enhancement cost remaining (May25 – May26) £50k

Contract Cost 26/27 – £478k

Total expenditure - £638k

X40

The proposed Grant of £30k for X40 Bus Service has an allocation of £30k within the BSIP Budget, with no spend to date against this budget line.

Kennet Island / Green Park Village Sunday Bus Service

A budget of £100k has been set within the BSIP Budget, to support these services. These services have been quoted as costing £95k, less revenue generated and therefore we do not envisage there being a pressure on this budget line.

P&R Fares Subsidy

At 1/11/2025, £262k (BSIP Funding) remains allocated to delivering P&R Fares subsidy.

Costs incurred but not paid - £104k

Estimated Costs for Oct-Dec - £35k

Estimated Costs for Jan-Mar - £25k

Total expenditure - £164k

12. Internal consultations

None.

Sections 13- 18: To be completed only for Decision A (express delegation from a Committee)

13. The name of the Committee:

14. Date of the meeting:

Click or tap to enter a date.

15. Minute number:

16. The delegation given by the Committee:

17. The name of any member of the committee who declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision:

18. Any councillor or officer required to be consulted prior to the exercise of this delegation and details of their response.