



Enhanced Partnership Forum Meeting

Monday 12 October 2026, 14:00 – 16:00

Agenda, Actions and Notable Points

Attendees (by invitation): Caroline Mekky (HCC), Geoff Hobbs (HCC), Martina Olley (HCC), Holly Brogden (HCC), Nick Farthing (Hampshire Community Rail Partnership), John Woodson (Bus User), Nicola Waight (Bus User), Dave Smith (Hampshire Sight Loss Council), Lucy McKeown (Winchester City Council), Phil Gagg (Winchester Action on Climate Change), Tom Hams (First Bus), David Garney (Southampton City Council), Andy McFarlane (HCC Disability Network), James O'Neill (Stagecoach South), Cali Sparks (Eastleigh Borough Council), Richard Tyldsley (Go South Coast), Lucy Maggs Krebs (HCC Disability Network), Phil Dominey (South Western Railway), Andrew Broster (Gosport Borough Council), Mark Cohen (Basingstoke & Deane District Council), Kevin Brolan (BCP Council), Izaaz Munshi (Dorset County Council), Stuart Jones (Bus User), Andy Whincup (Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust).

Apologies (from invitees): Andrew Wilson (HCC), George Cooper (Stagecoach South), Simon Fisher (Thames Valley Buses), Richard Gibson (Cross Country Trains), Mark Miller (Hampshire Community Rail Partnership), Mapenzi Ciurtin (Test Valley Borough Council), Adam Tewkesbury (Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), Owen Clark (Dorset Council), Katie Rasdall-Lawes (Test Valley Borough Council), Brogan Rehill (Age Concern).

Guests attending as observers: Cllr Sue Cook, (Winchester City Councillor representing Colden Common and Twyford; Maggie Smith (Colden Common Parish Council).

Location: Mitchell, Eli Court Podium, Hampshire County Council (Queen Elizabeth II), Winchester, SO23 8BH with stakeholders unable to attend in person joining the meeting on MS Teams

Agenda:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Actions from the last meeting (20 May 2026)
3. Bus operator updates (Bus Operators)
4. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution update
5. Recent Hampshire EP achievements
6. DfT Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) progress
7. Recent Government announcements and DfT guidance – high level overview
8. Round the Table Discussion & stakeholder feedback (All)
 - Before the meeting please can you give some thought to the following two questions to feed into the discussion:
 - a) We intend to produce an updated Hampshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by Spring 2027 as the current version needs updating. From your perspective, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the current Hampshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)?
 - b) The Bus Services Act requires LTAs to consult upon and publish a Bus Network Accessibility Plan. This plan must assess current provision and set out how we will improve access so that people with disabilities can travel on buses independently, safely, and in reasonable comfort. What are the important accessibility issues that need to be addressed (and solutions identified) in the Hampshire Bus Network Accessibility Plan?
9. Any Other Business and date of next EP Forum meeting (February 2027) – 5 minutes

Actions

	Action	Responsibility
1.	Forum attendees are invited to email hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk with any further thoughts and suggestions regarding Socially Necessary Local	EP Forum attendees

	Services (SNLS) and the Network Accessibility Plan (NAP) at any time. All feedback will be compiled and considered.	
2.	First Bus to review any feedback and outcomes from its recent accessibility discussions with local MPs, identify any issues affecting disabled passengers, and provide an update to interested parties. Feedback will be shared with HCC for onward circulation to relevant EP Forum members.	First Bus
3.	HCC Officers to collate Forum feedback received on current BSIP and use it to inform the development of the updated BSIP. Key themes will be reviewed through the appropriate BSIP working groups and considered as part of the evidence-gathering and strategy development process. HCC to share a draft revised BSIP with EP Forum attendees ahead of the February EP Forum meeting.	HCC
4.	Once on-bus announcement technology updates are complete, Stagecoach to ensure that next stop announcements are always on. Stagecoach to feed back to HCC at next liaison meeting what is being done to improve the accuracy of real-time information, stop mapping and closed stop information within Stagecoach systems and apps	Stagecoach
5.	HCC to consider whether more 'how to use the bus' resources (links to good You Tube videos) and travel confidence materials could be added to their bus webpage. This would complement existing Independent Travel Training initiatives.	HCC
6.	EP Forum to provide feedback to South Western Railway on the forthcoming railway timetable consultation regarding bus-rail connections (and any other feedback about train times) where issues have been identified: South Western Railway Building a Future Timetable	Forum attendees

Notable points

	Notable Points
i.	<p>The operators provided the following bus fleet and timetable updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go South Coast – Go South Coast reported on the launch of the new Bluestar 26 service and the introduction of the N9 night bus route. A Forum attendee asked whether there were plans to improve bus provision for the nearby One Horton Heath development. In response, it was noted that discussions are ongoing with local partners, and Eastleigh Borough Council confirmed it is due to commission a new bus service linking One Horton Heath with Eastleigh and Southampton as part of the planning obligations associated with the development. • The operator also provided an update on recruitment activity, highlighting continued progress in attracting more women and young adults into bus driving careers. Over the summer period, Bluestar participated in the Kids Go Free promotion, supported Armed Forces Day through free travel offers for service personnel and veterans, and implemented measures to support customers and colleagues during periods of extreme heat. The Forum were also advised that new buses are due to be introduced in Southampton in 2027, which will bring wider benefits across Hampshire through vehicle cascading and the withdrawal of older double-deck buses. • Forum attendees welcomed the introduction of Service 26 with discussions had around assessing how the service connects with other routes, including Service 49, and the opportunities it provides for onward travel. It noted that residents in some of the southern Winchester parishes have limited public transport options for travelling into Southampton and suggested that further local work could be undertaken to identify opportunities to improve connections and interchange times. Findings can be shared via hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk and forwarded directly to RT. • Forum attendees requested greater detail on the implementation and outcomes of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funded initiatives, with the advisory group benefitting from a better understanding of what has been effective, what factors have contributed to success, and whether there are opportunities to achieve further improvements without additional public funding. It was

suggested that, where services have received public funding, more detailed evaluation should be shared, including patronage, performance data and lessons learned. Where previously passenger numbers had not been shared with the Forum as this was considered to be commercially sensitive information, a Forum attendee suggested that in their view this wasn't commercially sensitive. In particular, it was requested that a more comprehensive analysis of Service 26 was provided in due course once baseline demand had been established (at the time of the meeting it had been operating for 5 weeks) and proposed that bus operators could report back to the Forum on both successes and challenges arising from new initiatives and service developments.

- In response, HCC noted that one of the key lessons from the launch of Service 26 had been the value of early promotion prior to commencement of the service. Advance engagement with local authorities, parish councils, community groups and residents, supported by targeted publicity and social media activity, helped raise awareness of the service before its launch and contributed positively to its introduction. This approach should be replicated for future service launches where possible.
- Forum attendees were also reminded of the [Services 6, 10, 16, 26. Eastern Southampton Bus Feedback Survey](#), which is seeking views on the changes made to services in the east of the city. All feedback is welcomed.
- **Stagecoach South** – Stagecoach reported on its programme of recent customer engagement roadshow events using their engagement bus which has visited Fleet, Yateley, Portsmouth and Farnborough. Recent service developments include the introduction of the new hourly Service 8 between Yateley and Farnborough, new evening journeys between Andover and Winchester on the Service 75, and taking over the operation of Surrey tendered Service 11 between Farnborough and Camberley. Marketing activity has included free weekend travel on Service 8 for the first month and the £1 evening fare initiative in Basingstoke. New ticket machines are due to be introduced from November, which are expected to improve data quality, app functionality and support future multi-operator ticketing. New electric double deck buses funded by Surrey have also entered service on Routes 1 and 20 in Aldershot, including increased capacity on Service 20 through the introduction of double-deck vehicles. Service 700 is also scheduled to receive electric buses from next spring funded by West Sussex County Council.
- During discussion, Forum participants welcomed the newer vehicles, although it was noted that some buses in Aldershot still carry Basingstoke branding. Stagecoach confirmed these are being repainted. Feedback was given by Forum attendees on problems experienced with the accuracy of the Stagecoach app including the in-app real-time passenger information, incorrect vehicle tracking, stop maps not reflecting temporary stop closures. Attendees found that next-stop audio-visual announcements and displays were on occasion not working. Forum attendees advised that these issues remain unresolved despite being raised previously and highlighted the impact on passengers, particularly older and disabled users who rely on accurate information. Stagecoach advised that the new ticket machines, together with roaming SIM technology, should improve vehicle tracking and the reliability of real-time information. It was also noted that a wider programme is underway to replace older on bus next-stop information systems with upgraded TFT screens across Hampshire. Forum attendees noted that similar issues are experienced with audio-visual announcement technology not being in operation on some First Bus services used. Hampshire Sight Loss Council (SLC) reported ongoing work between Stagecoach and Hampshire SLC to improve app accessibility. HCC Disability Network also available to support if/when testing future developments.
- Forum attendees raised concerns about the absence of visual and audio passenger information on some Stagecoach services during system upgrades and stressed the importance of minimising gaps in provision, particularly given the need to comply with the Government's new accessibility requirements. Stagecoach advised that rollout times were made longer as a result of having a single national supplier for ticket machine and passenger information systems and confirmed that existing equipment had not been intentionally switched off but that supplier issues had impacted the ability to keep older accessibility technology maintained and working.
- **Solent from First Bus** - First Bus provided an update on recent activity, including the successful launch of the X3 service between Fareham and South Parade Pier, increased Sunday frequencies on

	<p>the E1/E2 and Service 5 corridors, and additional services operated during the Victorious Festival. The summer "Kids Go Free" promotion was reported as successful, alongside Portsmouth City Council's free bus weekends during September. Engagement activity has included discussions with MPs, disability groups and local stakeholders on accessibility issues, as well as a roadshow in Clanfield and Waterlooville as part of Catch the Bus Month. Further service improvements, including additional express services, are planned for 2027.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Forum attendee asked whether discussions with local MPs regarding accessibility had identified any specific issues affecting disabled passengers. First Bus agreed to review any feedback received and provide an update at a future meeting. • A Forum attendee asked whether the X3 service could operate on Sundays. First Bus advised that there are currently no immediate plans to introduce Sunday X3 services, although this is an option that could be considered next year. • The "Kids Go Free" initiative was welcomed, but Forum attendees suggested that any future time restrictions should be carefully considered to avoid unintended adverse impacts on families making journeys with young children. • Forum representatives also discussed public transport provision for the Welborne development, including when services may commence and whether routes would serve Fareham railway station. It was noted that no arrangements have yet been finalised, with the developer currently undertaking a competitive tendering process involving a number of operators. Forum attendees highlighted the importance of integrating bus and rail services and expressed concern that public transport links are not always specified clearly enough through the planning process. Concerns were also raised regarding there was not a bus service that routed past the Sun Lane development in Alresford, and it was agreed that this was something that would be discussed separately following the meeting.
ii.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) update – The Forum was advised that the previous reorganisation proposal for Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton has been withdrawn and that the Government's wider review programme remains paused. Local elections scheduled for May 2027 will continue to take place for existing borough and district councils. Day-to-day council services will remain unchanged during the review period. • Devolution update - Hampshire and Solent Combined County Authority was established in July 2026 and plans for devolution remain on track, with a mayoral election anticipated in May 2028. The new arrangements are expected to bring additional powers and funding to the area, particularly in relation to transport, skills and economic growth.
iii.	<p>Recent Hampshire EP achievements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hampshire County Council provided an update on recent Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) achievements, highlighting continued investment in bus services and infrastructure across the county. This included the installation of 18 new bus shelters with real-time information on the Gosport Busway, 56 new or refurbished shelters in the Winchester area, and additional shelter improvements delivered by Bauer Media. Patronage has continued to grow, with bus journeys up 7%, while BSIP funding has supported improved timetables on 23 routes and the introduction of new services, including the X3, Service 8 and Bluestar 26. The Gosport Travel Safe initiative launched uniformed patrols to tackle anti-social behaviour, alongside infrastructure improvements and new CCTV provision. HCC also noted the introduction of 22 new electric buses, ongoing bus priority measures, and the launch of the N9 night bus service. • Grant funding awards – The Forum attendees were updated on recent grant funding awards, including Zero Emission Bus Infrastructure funding for Stagecoach to install charging infrastructure at Farlington depot and for Go South Coast to support the Activ8 route between Andover and Salisbury. It was also noted that Rural Bus Shelter Fund grants have been fully allocated following strong demand from town and parish councils, with a further funding tranche planned. In addition, Independent Travel Training funding has been awarded to OpenSight to support delivery of the programme over the next two years. • Promotional fares – The Forum were updated on a range of promotional fare initiatives delivered through BSIP funding. This included the relaunch and rebranding of the KB1 service between Kings

	<p>Barton and Winchester, supported by £1 single fares during August and September, and Stagecoach's £1 evening fare offer on Basingstoke town services after 7pm. It was also reported that the Great British Summer Savings campaign generated significant growth in youth travel, alongside increases in adult and concessionary passenger journeys.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch the bus month events - As part of Catch the Bus Month, Hampshire County Council, Bus Users UK and local bus operators held three customer engagement events in Eastleigh (Go South Coast), Clanfield/Waterlooville (First) and Farnborough (Stagecoach). The events provided an opportunity for passengers to speak directly with operators and the Passenger Transport team, share feedback and suggest improvements to local bus services. Feedback was generally positive, with passengers highlighting helpful drivers and good-quality vehicles, while also raising concerns about service change outcomes and suggesting potential route and service improvements. Around 200 survey responses have been received, with feedback now being reviewed with operators to help inform future improvements and engagement activity. • Thomas Pocklington Trust (Havant site visit) – The Forum heard about collaborative work in Havant between Hampshire County Council and accessibility groups, including the Thomas Pocklington Trust, to review bus stop infrastructure, wayfinding and real-time information from the perspective of blind and partially sighted passengers. Feedback highlighted opportunities to improve accessibility and consistency across the network, with HCC thanked for its positive engagement and commitment to addressing barriers to accessible travel. • A Forum attendee raised the issue of there being a several month delay in Real Time Screens being installed at new bus stops on Sussex Street, City Road, and Jewry Street in Winchester. HCC explained that the new Real Time Screens could not be installed until a third-party supplier had provided a power supply connection to/within the new shelter. There were delays in getting this contractor to provide the power supply connection. Unfortunately, this electrical connection issue resulted in a long delay in installing equipment. HCC will work with them to seek to improve this process in the future. • 'Bus It, Fare Play' Joint Marketing Campaign – The Forum received an update on the Bus It? Fare Play summer marketing campaign, delivered jointly by Hampshire County Council, Southampton City Council and local bus operators. The campaign generated significant awareness and engagement, achieving over 3.3 million digital impressions, 8.5 million outdoor impressions, 190,000 engagements and 59,000 clicks. Video content performed particularly strongly, with promotions targeted at older passengers proving most effective. The partnership approach was highlighted as a key factor in the campaign's success, with lessons learned to help shape future bus marketing activity and improve engagement with younger audiences. • 2026 Your Bus Journey Survey results so far - Early results from around 350 surveys completed between April and July show overall passenger satisfaction has increased from 91% in 2025 to 93% in 2026. Strong satisfaction levels were recorded across a range of measures, including bus drivers, journey times, punctuality and bus stop facilities, indicating that passenger experience across Hampshire's bus network remains positive. • Bus Focus Group Findings - Hampshire County Council held focus group sessions in July and September with 15 participants from a range of age groups and locations across Hampshire, including both bus users and non-users. Participants highlighted affordable fares, helpful drivers and well-connected routes as key strengths of bus travel. Concerns were raised around service reliability, frequency, journey times, rural accessibility and connections to key destinations such as hospitals and rail stations. Participants also called for more accurate real-time information, a single source of bus travel information, improved accessibility and better-quality bus stops and stations.
iv.	<p>DfT Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forum attendees on the circulation list received presentation slide updates on this prior to the meeting. This item was not discussed, as priority was given to the Round Table Discussion during the second half of the meeting.
v.	<p>Recent Government announcements and DfT guidance:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Forum attendees on the circulation list received presentation slide updates on this prior to the meeting. This item was not discussed, as priority was given to the Round Table Discussion during the second half of the meeting.
vi.	<p>Round the Table Discussion & stakeholder feedback (All)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HCC intend to produce an updated Hampshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) by Spring 2027 as the current version needs updating. From your perspective, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the current Hampshire Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)? – Forum participants discussed the above question and provided feedback. The Bus Services Act requires LTAs to consult upon and publish a Bus Network Accessibility Plan. This plan must assess current provision and set out how we will improve access so that people with disabilities can travel on buses independently, safely, and in reasonable comfort. What are the important accessibility issues that need to be addressed (and solutions identified) in the Hampshire Bus Network Accessibility Plan? – Forum attendees discussed the above question and provided feedback.
vii.	<p>Any Other Business and date of next EP Forum meeting (May 2026)</p> <p>Defining Socially Necessary Local Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers confirmed that work is underway to identify socially necessary local services, with a completed list expected by March 2027. It was noted that, subject to the final assessment methodology, a significant proportion of Hampshire's bus network is expected to be defined as being socially necessary. Officers advised that the methodology to be used to give every route a socially necessary score (taking into account population age profile, deprivation, rurality, use for access to healthcare, use for access to retail/ education etc). expected to align broadly with the Department for Transport's guidance set out in the July 2026 Enhanced Partnership Manual. The forum heard that a scoring framework is being developed to assess the impacts of changes to individual services, helping to ensure the consequences for affected communities and passengers are appropriately considered. Forum attendees discussed the future funding of socially necessary and deregistered services. Officers advised there are currently no plans to ringfence funding specifically for this purpose, although this could be considered in the future if circumstances change. It was also noted that funding has previously been used to mitigate service reductions and maintain service levels where appropriate. Further discussion focused on the distribution of Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding and the importance of ensuring future investment supports passenger growth across a broad range of communities and service types. Officers noted that decisions regarding the longer-term allocation of bus funding beyond 2027/28 is likely to fall to the combined county authority or new mayoral arrangements and the approach taken to distributing funding across constituent local transport authority areas and investment priorities (and policy approaches underpinning them) could be subject to change. Forum participants were reminded that a number of LABG-funded grant opportunities remain open for applications. Attendees were encouraged to contact the Hampshire Bus Strategy team for an initial discussion before submitting an application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Travel Training Grant Stream (2026/27–2027/28) - LABG Independent Travel Training Grant Hampshire County Council Parish Council Bus Shelter Grant Scheme - Parish Council Bus Shelter Grant Scheme Hampshire County Council Community-Led Transport Grant - Community Led Transport Grant - phase 2 Hampshire County Council
viii.	<p>The next Hants EP Forum (hybrid) meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 10th February 2027, from 14:00 to 16:00, in advance of the next Hampshire EP Board (26 February 2027).</p>