



## Enhanced Partnership Forum Meeting Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026, 14:00 – 16:00 Agenda, Actions and Notable Points

**Attendees:** Andrew Wilson (HCC), Caroline Mekky (HCC), Martina Olley (HCC), Holly Brogden (HCC), David Airey (Bus User), Kevin Brolan (BCP Council), Andrew Broster (Gosport Borough Council), Mapenzi Ciurtin (Test Valley Borough Council), Mark Cohen (Basingstoke and Deane District Council), George Cooper (Stagecoach), Phil Gagg (Winchester Action on Climate Change), David Garney (Southampton City Council), Matt Griffith (First Bus), Kate Healey (Hampshire Sight Loss Council), Stuart Jones (Bus User), Rebecca Lockwood Norris (Wiltshire Council), Andy Macfarlane (HCC Disability Network), Lucy Maggs Krebs (HCC Disability Network), Dan Massey (Winchester City Council), Donnalyn Morris (East Sussex County Council), Izaaz Munshi (Dorset County Council), Dave Smith (Thomas Pocklington Trust), Cali Sparks (Eastleigh Borough Council), Nicola Waight (Bus User), Andy Whincup (Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), John Woodson (Bus User).

**Apologies:** Geoff Hobbs (HCC), Phil Dominey (South Western Railway), Simon Fisher (Thames Valley Buses), Peter Matthews (First Bus), Mark Miller (Hampshire Community Rail), Peter Moody (Hampshire Sight Loss Council), James O’Neill (Stagecoach), Brogan Rehill (Age Concern), Simon Rowland (White Bus), Adam Tewkesbury (Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust), Richard Tyldsley (Go South Coast).

**Location:** Chute, First Floor South, 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 (22 October 2025)
3. Bus operator updates (Bus Operators)
4. Update on DfT Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) announcement
5. Update on DfT National bus statistics and timescales for annual progress report
6. Round the Table Discussion & stakeholder feedback (All)  
*HCC officers will outline key themes and projects proposed for the 2026/27 BSIP work programme, incorporating ideas from the October EP Forum and other feedback. We will review each theme below and invite forum members’ comments to help ensure the programme reflects Hampshire’s priorities:*
  - a. *Travel Training*
  - b. *Bus Shelter Grant Fund*
  - c. *Community-Led Transport Grant Fund*
  - d. *Bus Stop Infrastructure Improvements*
    - i. *Real time information*
    - ii. *Audio next stop announcements*
    - iii. *Shelter upgrades*
  - e. *Behaviour Change and Marketing*
  - f. *Minor Works – Bus stop layout improvements to reduce dwell times*
7. Any Other Business and date of next EP Forum meeting (May/June 2026)

### Actions

	Action	Responsibility
1.	HCC to review the height of the hanging signage and RTI displays at Andover Bus Station following reports that they are positioned too high	HCC
2.	HCC to explore extending the scope of the current Parish Shelter Bus Grant scheme in 2026/27 to include district and borough councils	HCC

3.	Forum attendees are invited to email <a href="mailto:hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk">hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk</a> with any locations where buses struggle to enter, exit or operate efficiently and may benefit from bus stop layout improvements. HCC will review each site on a case-by-case basis with the relevant bus operator(s).	Forum attendees
4.	EP forum attendees to email <a href="mailto:hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk">hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk</a> by Monday 26 January if they would like their name or organisation removed from the EP Forum minutes before publication.	EP Forum attendees
5.	HCC to consider creating a working group with rail operators and key stakeholders to explore improvements to bus–rail interchange, covering infrastructure, timetabling, signage and network design, and exploring the potential of piloting a small number of sites, recognising that each interchange will require site-specific planning.	HCC

### Notable points

Notable Points	
i.	<p>The operators provided the following bus fleet updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Stagecoach</b> - Stagecoach reported continued increase in passenger numbers across its eight depots, including those in Hampshire, with performance improving. Roadworks remain the main operational challenge, and the £3 fare cap is still influencing demand, though the overall outlook is positive. Stagecoach confirmed that EVs will start operating out of Aldershot depot (on the 1 and 20 services) in the coming months, with existing vehicles retained in Hampshire to improve the fleet age profile as older buses are retired. More Aldershot routes will move to double-deckers due to strong interurban growth. Concerns were raised about the ageing Winchester fleet, and Stagecoach outlined renewal plans that will significantly reduce vehicle age and replace on-bus next stop Audio-visual equipment with new systems. Stagecoach noted that there have been major improvements in EV technology and battery range over the last 5 years, while highlighting depot power capacity as the main challenge. Despite EVs have higher upfront costs (compared to diesel) and some whole-life cost uncertainty, unscheduled maintenance requirements are lower and feedback from other operators is positive.         </li> <li> <b>First Bus</b> - First Bus reported a positive experience with EVs, noting strong passenger feedback and fewer mechanical issues. Issues of damage to buses on the Eclipse Busway have been resolved, and First thanked HCC and partners for their contribution, also highlighting strengthened relationships with the police. The M27 closure between Christmas and New Year and diversion via the A27 was well managed with minimal disruption and few complaints. Recruitment remains strong, with recent changes in the commercial team. Passenger growth is strong across all areas. In response to a question about concessionary pass use, First confirmed they have also seen a notable increase, supported by targeted marketing and staff training. First were praised by EP Forum members for the reliability of their services.         </li> <li>           Dave Smith noted that EVs are very quiet, particularly when stationary, which can pose risks for blind and visually impaired people, and suggested introducing an audible alert. First Bus confirmed that this feedback has already been passed to the vehicle supplier and that engineers are trialling potential solutions. Matt to record Dave’s comments and keep him updated.         </li> <li>           Nicola asked First and Hampshire for an update on plans for Fareham Bus Station. HCC advised that BSIP funding has been allocated for its redevelopment and that they are working with Fareham Borough Council and First on proposals to demolish and rebuild the station as an enclosed facility, similar to Andover. The project is at an early stage, with architects appointed and options being developed. Hampshire SLC offered support to help ensure the design meets the needs of blind and partially sighted people. John raised issues at Andover Bus Station, including signage and the height of the hanging RTI displays, which HCC will investigate. Phil welcomed the investment but noted the need for consistency, given the closure of Winchester Bus Station. A request was also made for toilets and baby-changing facilities in the new Fareham station due to the distance to those in the shopping centre. An EP Forum attendee added anxiety over toilet facility provision is a common barrier for disabled people accessing services.         </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Forum member asked about the status of plans for Winchester Bus Station. HCC confirmed that the bus station is owned by Winchester City Council and is planned to close with the land being redeveloped as part of the Central Winchester Regeneration project. Bus stands would be relocated onto kerbside space in nearby streets. This is dependent on available land and highway space, and no final decisions on stand locations and bus routing have been made. HCC is working with operators and Winchester City Council, and consultants have carried out detailed work to identify the most suitable stand locations. Closure is not imminent. HCC thanked members for the offer of support and noted that accessibility will be a core consideration. Lucy added that an accessible facility would also be valuable and asked whether Changing Places funding could be considered.</li> <li>• Stuart asked how progress on the Station Interchange improvement plan (SIIP) is monitored, noting the need to align with other plans such as railway projects. HCC confirmed that the SIIP is available on HCC's <a href="#">website</a> and that HCC are working to secure staff resource to deliver and track the planned improvements.</li> </ul>
ii.	<p><b>Update on DfT Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG) announcement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new funding settlement provides multi-year certainty, with LABG allocations broadly consistent with recent years and rising from £14.88m in 2026/27 to £15.28m in 2029/30. Capital in 26/27 is lower than in 25/26 but increases gradually, while the amount of revenue remains the same each year. The 2029/30 revenue figure is only an indicative allocation at this stage and may change following the next Government Comprehensive Spending Review. HCC views the settlement positively and will continue delivering BSIP priorities. Future changes, including Local Government Reorganisation and the introduction of a mayor in 2028 will require further funding discussions but are not expected to disrupt current plans.</li> <li>• Phil asked whether rules on eligible spend had changed i.e. using BSIP funding to replace the County's core budget. HCC advised that there is only draft guidance, and final guidance is expected in March. HCC also cautioned that introducing additional supported bus contracts to the market may result in a recurring year-on-year funding liability without likelihood of operating on a commercial basis, so HCC must consider carefully what commitments are viable within a four-year settlement.</li> </ul>
iii.	<p>Update on DfT National bus statistics, timescales for annual progress report and an update on the Transport Focus 2025 'Your Bus Journey' surveys to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DfT national bus statistics</b> show continued positive performance, with 1.7 million more journeys made in 2024/25, a 6.8% year-on-year increase. To support comparison by population, HCC will add a slide showing bus journeys per head of population and circulate the updated deck to EP Forum members along with the minutes. Southampton continues to perform strongly, ranking fourth nationally (outside London) and operating above pre-pandemic levels. However, Hampshire's lower journeys per head remain a concern; Phil suggested there is scope to increase usage and that a more fundamental review of service delivery may be beneficial. Learning from the success of the Isle of Wight could help inform future planning.</li> <li>• <b>Annual Progress report for 2025</b> – summary of EP achievements between January and December 2025 is planned for publication in mid/late-February.</li> <li>• <b>2025 'Your Bus Journey' survey results</b> to date indicate consistently high satisfaction with bus journeys, with overall satisfaction rising from 86% in 2024 to 89% in 2025, with further 2025 surveys still to come. Interim findings also show strong and improving satisfaction across most aspects of the journey experience. Satisfaction with bus drivers remains particularly high at 90%, and there have been notable improvements in satisfaction with punctuality (+6%) and waiting times (+7%).</li> </ul>
iv.	<p><b>Round the Table Discussion &amp; stakeholder feedback (All)</b></p> <p>HCC officers presented the key themes and projects proposed for the 2026/27 and 2027/28 BSIP work programme utilising the DfT LABG funding, incorporating ideas from the October EP Forum and wider feedback. Each theme was reviewed, and EP Forum members were invited to provide comments to ensure the programme aligns with Hampshire's priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Travel training/moments of change</b> – HCC has provisionally allocated funding to support travel-training initiatives between 2026/27 and 2029/30. HCC will also work with operators to source promotional leaflets about places accessible by bus and will explore sending these to</li> </ul>

residents turning 66 alongside their new concessionary fare bus pass. Feedback from EP Forum members included targeting families through multi-tickets and group-travel promotions, as well as focusing on younger audiences at key “moments of change”, such as moving from school to college or into employment when travel habits are most malleable, rather than trying to influence older residents with more established patterns. Members also suggested providing information for new parents via libraries located on good bus routes. It was additionally noted that difficulties with interchanges can deter bus use, and that improving network navigation should come before extensive travel training, particularly in areas where bus services are limited.

- **Understanding barriers to bus use for non-bus users** – HCC responded to suggestions about holding focus groups with non-bus users by confirming plans to work with the HCC Insight and Engagement Team to organise a dedicated focus group to explore the key reasons why people choose not to travel by bus. Forum members highlighted several practical barriers to bus use, particularly for families. One member noted that even in areas with good services, they often choose to drive because travelling with children requires knowing where toilets are located, and the lack of reliable facilities at bus stations is a significant deterrent. Concerns were also raised about cost, with some families finding bus travel more expensive than driving on a trip-by-trip basis, even if the broader costs of car ownership are higher. Suggestions included offering opportunities for people anxious about bus travel to familiarise themselves through “meet the bus” events and hosting future focus groups on barriers to bus use, including affordability and interchange issues. Members also emphasised that for bus travel to be seen as a genuine alternative to the car, supporting infrastructure, such as toilets, waiting areas, and clearer interchange information, needs to match the standard expected of other modes and suggested better promotion of nearby amenities as well as improved provision when new bus stations are planned. Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust offered to host any focus groups, which HCC will explore further.
- **High car dependency in new developments** – Forum members previously raised concerns that new developments are too car-dependent and not well served by current approaches to bus service enhancements. In response, HCC outlined plans for a new competitive funding stream (for bus operators) from 2026/27 to support bus services linking major new housing areas to key destinations, providing support ahead of, or in addition to, what is secured through Section 106 agreements. In addition, up to £300k from the 2025/26 BSIP allocation (half capital & half revenue) has been earmarked for Community-Led Transport Grants that would be awarded to help community groups establish or expand services, including those serving new developments currently without bus connections. HCC noted that uptake so far has been low and officers are monitoring this closely to identify any changes needed for 2026/27. Forum members also highlighted that the National Planning Policy Framework places responsibility on developers to fund public transport for new developments and suggested local planning policies should make this requirement clearer. It was additionally noted that increased community grant funding could particularly benefit market towns, helping reduce reliance on the Council for services.
- **Need to update on-bus next stop technology** – At the October EP Forum it was noted that there are unreliable audio systems on some Stagecoach buses. HCC has since contributed towards the cost of Stagecoach procuring and installing On-Bus ‘Next Stop’ information screens on around 40 buses operating from the Andover, Basingstoke, and Winchester depots. Stagecoach reported that they currently operate two different systems supplied by different providers, meaning that the quality of on-bus announcements varies across the fleet. As newer vehicles come into service, older buses with the less reliable announcement systems will gradually be replaced. A noticeable improvement is expected over the coming months, as all vehicles are being upgraded to meet the government’s requirement that by October 2026 almost all local buses and coaches in Great Britain must provide mandatory audio and visual next-stop announcements.
- **Real time information improvements** – In October, HCC were asked to explore rolling out audio announcements at bus stops likely to be regularly used by visually impaired people. HCC confirmed that new RTI units with an audio button will be piloted at high-footfall stops on Romsey Road in Winchester, serving the Royal Hampshire County Hospital. If the pilot is successful, the technology will be extended to other suitable locations. HCC will work with the Hampshire Sight Loss Council to

	<p>identify priority sites and support any trial exercises. Attendees were also invited to suggest locations for wider RTI improvements, with railway stations and Winchester’s Silver Hill bus stops highlighted as important stops with multiple services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Shelter upgrades</b> – EP Forum attendees previously suggested that HCC work with operators to improve bus–rail interchange, including connections and passenger information. In response, HCC is proposing to allocate a significant sum of 26/27 capital funding over the next two years for interchange and station improvements, with further funding provisionally allocated to extending the Parish Shelter Bus Grant in 2026/27 and 2027/28. Phil stressed that improvements must go beyond infrastructure to include timetable planning, signage and network design, while HCC proposed piloting a small number of locations given the complexity of aligning rail (fixed) and bus (more flexible) timetables. HCC invited ideas and noted a working group could be formed, emphasising that each interchange requires site-specific consideration. EBC noted that they and other district and borough councils own their bus stops and would welcome funding support. HCC will consider the merits of extending the scope of the current Parish Shelter Bus Grant scheme to include shelter locations that are the responsibility of district and borough councils.         </li> <li> <b>Behaviour change and marketing</b> – At the October EP Forum, attendees suggested undertaking targeted outreach to new families to build long-term bus habits and noted that families are often overlooked in bus promotion. In response, HCC is working with Stagecoach, First and Go South Coast on a joint marketing campaign for spring 2026, which will include an educational element aimed at non-bus users, showing the benefits of using bus operator’s apps to help plan and take a bus journey; while not exclusively focused on families, this group is one of several potential target audiences being explored with the appointed marketing agency. Attendees also highlighted low public awareness of service frequency, and HCC will work with operators to ensure clearer promotion in future campaigns, with opportunities for additional fare and marketing initiatives in the future. A further suggestion was to develop key community locations as local information hubs for bus services. HCC confirmed they are open to piloting this with interested parish councils, noting that further scoping is required. EBC expressed interest in working in partnership to promote “super stops” locally and shared examples of successful short video campaigns for cycling; the Forum discussed the potential for similar social media content to highlight the ease and speed of local bus services, such as the X4 route.         </li> <li> <b>Bus stop layout improvements to reduce dwell times</b> – HCC is proposing a minor works fund (over four years) to improve bus stop layouts, such as adjusting layby geometry, to reduce dwell times. EP Forum attendees and operators were encouraged to highlight locations where buses struggle to enter or exit stops. Phil noted that reducing deviations into tight town centres, such as at Bishop’s Waltham, could significantly cut journey times.         </li> <li> <b>Improving the bus passenger journey experience</b> – Other key proposed capital and revenue projects within the predicted 2026/27 work programme include capital investment in bus priority measures, zero-emission bus infrastructure and accessibility upgrades. On the revenue side, proposed projects include driver training support, delivery of the Bus Network Accessibility Plan, enhancements to bus stop infrastructure, hub-and-spoke pilot schemes, and the integration of school and college routes into the wider bus network. Multiple forum attendees strongly supported this approach, favouring a programme of smaller, targeted schemes that offer better cumulative impact and return on investment than large single projects. Stuart suggested Winchester Southern Parishes as a useful area for testing or helping to select candidate schemes.         </li> </ul>
<b>v.</b>	<p><b>Any Other Business and date of next EP Forum meeting (May 2026)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>           John asked when the 26/27 service enhancement programme will be known. HCC confirmed that discussions with First, GSC and Stagecoach are underway to shortlist and agree which routes will be funded. There is no confirmed programme at this stage, but it is likely it will comprise continuation of improvements introduced in 2025 together with some new enhancements.         </li> <li>           Phil asked whether pump-priming parameters could be widened, noting operator concerns that some services cannot extend to rail stations without additional cost and fleet. He suggested exploring compensation for these types of extensions, given the strong rail catchment. HCC confirmed that operators will need to propose their priorities and submit a short business case;         </li> </ul>

	<p>decisions remain commercially driven, and if operators believe there is a case for this, they should submit it for HCC consideration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EP Forum attendees agreed that the meeting minutes can be published on the <a href="#">website</a>. The published minutes will include attendee names and their type of attendance only (e.g., bus user or organisation name). No email addresses or other contact details will be included. Anyone who would like their name or organisation removed before publication should email <a href="mailto:hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk">hampshire.bus.strategy@hants.gov.uk</a> by Monday 26 January. After publication, attendees may request removal of their name at any time by emailing HCC.</li> </ul>
vi.	<p>The next Hampshire EP Forum meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026, 14:00 – 16:00 in advance of the next Hampshire EP Board (2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026).</p>