

Cabinet Meeting Resolution

**Executive
Forward Plan
Reference**

E3441

Options for Bus Franchising in the West of England

Date of Meeting	9-Mar-23
The Issue	Proposal for the West of England Combined Authority to investigate options for bus franchising in the West of England.
The decision	<p>To request the Council's Leader to write formally to the WECA Mayor requesting that the Mayor:</p> <p>(a) Commissions an independent review of options for the franchising of bus operations with the West of England, including considering the adoption of precepting powers; and provides a fully costed business case for the recommended changes engaging fully with each of the WECA constituent authorities at all stages of the review.</p> <p>(b) Provides regular updates to the Planning, Transport and Housing Board on the progress of the review.</p>
Rationale for decision	<p>From the passenger perspective, franchising enables:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A simple, unified, and integrated ticketing and product set under one brand (which competition law prevents in a deregulated environment) • A single identity for bus services and potentially other public transport modes, which is easy to understand for new users • A unified, easy to use network of integrated public transport services • Consistent standards of service, including vehicle, driver and customer care standards • One accountable body, integrated real time information and a single point of contact for customers <p>From transport authority perspective, franchising provides for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater levels of connectivity, where more effective cross-subsidy allows the development of a comprehensive network and allows closer integration with other modes such as active travel and rail, enabling more people to better access employment, education, training, retail, leisure and other opportunities. • A more attractive network is easier to use and to market to new customers and visitors, encouraging patronage growth which in turn can help drive healthy revenues.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping reduce car dependency, emissions and highway congestion as more people make use of an integrated public transport network and active travel modes.• Enables existing resources and subsidies to be pooled efficiently, driving better value from the high levels of public support and reducing leakage into excess operator profits. <p>From operator perspective, franchising offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A growing, stable and enduring market for operators.• The freedom to focus on service delivery, making sure buses run reliably and punctually, enhancing customer care and delivering on contractually guaranteed service standards – such as cleanliness, reliability and safety and security.
Other options considered	<p>The current West of England Enhanced Partnership (EP) Scheme (made in accordance with Section 138G(1) of the Transport Act 2000) could be retained and not modified.</p> <p>It is considered that franchising could provide a better mechanism for improving the transport network within the West of England.</p>

The Decision is subject to Call-In within 5 working days of publication of the decision