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Background and context

Transport Act 2000

1.1 The Transport Act 2000 sets out the council’s duties in relation to bus information. Under Section 139 each local transport authority must determine what local bus information should be made available to the public and the way it should be made available.

1.2 The Act requires the council to consult local user groups and the Traffic Commissioner.

1.3 The council is expected to work in partnership with local bus operators, however, Section 140 provides the council with the power to obtain information from bus operators if the need should arise and recover any reasonable costs incurred.

1.4 The council is obligated under Section 141 to treat all operators fairly and reasonably.

1.5 The dominant operator in North Somerset is First. However, in recent years there has been an increasingly diverse range of bus operators in North Somerset, operating both commercial and supported services.

First, Crosville and The Kings Ferry are some of the bus and coach operators running services in North Somerset.

1.6 The council will also work with neighbouring local authorities and consider joint working where appropriate.

1.7 Relevant extracts of the Act are reproduced in Appendix A.
Local Transport Plan

1.8 The Joint Local Transport Plan 3 (JLTP3) identifies five key transport goals:

- **Goal 1**: Reduce carbon emissions
- **Goal 2**: Support economic growth
- **Goal 3**: Contribute to better safety, health and security
- **Goal 4**: Promote accessibility
- **Goal 5**: Improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment
1.9 In particular, the JLTP3 identifies the following challenges of Goal 2 – “support economic growth” – with a key role for bus information:

- Promote use of alternatives to the private car
- Encourage more sustainable patterns of travel behaviour

1.10 The JLTP3 highlights that schemes that seek to improve public transport information could make a contribution to achieving all five key transport goals.

1.11 In 2014/15, £23,580 is being spent from the council’s revenue budget on public transport information, including the free Public Transport Guide, timetable booklets, roadside timetables, advertisements and other promotional work. North Somerset Council also contributes £20,000 annually towards Traveline.

Public Satisfaction

1.12 In the 2012 North Somerset Residents’ Survey, 65% of bus users (who have used a bus service within the last year) said they were fairly satisfied with public transport information in North Somerset. This represents an increase from 2008, which dipped to 40%.

1.13 Analysis of the Residents’ Survey suggests that satisfaction with public transport information amongst users is above average for those in the 60+ age bracket and below average among the 30 – 60 age bracket.

1.14 There is some suggestion that satisfaction is below average in Clevedon and rural areas, and amongst residents who are self-employed or home-makers.

1.15 There is some suggestion that satisfaction is above average in Weston-super-Mare and amongst residents who are part-time workers, retired and disabled.

1.16 The results of the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Survey show a similar trend. Overall satisfaction with the provision of public transport information in North Somerset increased from 48% satisfaction in 2008 to 63% in 2012.

1.17 There is a steady increase in satisfaction with the amount, clarity and accuracy of public transport information between 2008 and 2012. The most pronounced improvement has been in the reliability of electronic information at bus stops, which has increased from 38% to 66% between 2008 and 2012.

1.18 However, there is still room for improvement and supports the need for an ongoing bus information strategy.

Perceptions of public transport

1.19 For both users and non-users, the way that public transport is perceived can be a reflection on the council as a whole. We therefore want local people to be positive about public transport information in North Somerset and will seek to improve the satisfaction rates described above.
Objectives and scope of the strategy

2.1 The objectives of the strategy are:

- to make clear the respective responsibilities of North Somerset Council and the bus operators in providing bus service information
- to provide a framework for the delivery of bus service information
- to make travel by bus more accessible and promote social inclusion
- to encourage greater use of bus travel
- to make full use of the range of media available to deliver bus service information and reach the maximum audience

2.2 This strategy focuses on local bus services, but also makes reference to park and ride, coach, and community transport services.

2.3 Bus services are part of the wider transport network in North Somerset. This strategy will therefore set out the council’s intention to seek the integration of information about local bus services with other modes of transport, such as rail, and the provision of information at transport interchanges.
Information requirements

Target audience

3.1 The population of North Somerset is some 202,566 (2011 Census). The Office for National Statistics predicts the population of the district will grow by a further 31,000 people by 2021.

3.2 The 2011 Census also showed the number of occupied dwellings in the district as 88,200. We expect approximately 7,000 new dwellings to be built by 2021.

3.3 As well as residents, there are people travelling to North Somerset for work, education, shopping and leisure. There are also a significant number of visitors. This strategy seeks to disseminate information about bus services to as wide an audience as possible.

3.4 There is also the opportunity to encourage modal shift by effectively promoting bus services to residents who would normally use their car.

3.5 To be more effective, information should as far as possible recognise different people’s needs. In North Somerset these needs may vary between the residents of Weston-super-Mare, the towns of Clevedon, Nailsea and Portishead and the rural population. Needs are also influenced by age, gender, family situation, health and economic circumstances.
3.6 The proximity of Bristol influences travel patterns both as an origin and destination of bus journeys.

**Required information**

3.7 The council considers that good information should be made available to the public on the following aspects of local bus services:

- route and timetabling
- ticketing options
- facilities for disabled passengers
- travel concessions including the Diamond Travelcard scheme
- connections with other public transport services including park and ride
- disruption to bus services arising from road closures and other highways incidents
- facilities at start/interchange/end points
- links with tourist attractions and recreational footpaths
- facilities on vehicles e.g. low floor, facilities for wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushchairs, luggage and carriage of bicycles

3.8 The basic information concerning routes and timetabling is governed by the Western Area Traffic Commissioner’s registration requirements. Each operator is obliged to register local bus services with the Western Areas Traffic Office, giving a minimum of 56 days statutory notice before the new or revised service comes into operation.

*Local bus registrations*
The council supports the introduction and use of electronic bus registration by operators as this will make it easier for the council to monitor changes in the pattern of bus services. It will also facilitate the efficient updating of the Traveline service.

Generally all information should include the following (as appropriate):

- details of the Traveline service
- the operators name and contact details
- important interchanges and major destinations
- customer service offices and/or travel shops
- ticketing and information agents
- arrangements for responding to complaints
- availability of a customer charter
- Travel West website
- acknowledgment of any financial support from the council

Information provision

Information may be provided in one or a number of the following formats:

- printed material
- roadside information displays
- face-to-face contact
- telephone and SMS text
- internet, email and social media
- local media
- real time information displays
- on-board bus displays and bus branding
- marketing initiatives and events

Further details about the use of each of these formats will be set out in the following sections 4 to 12.
Printed material

Timetable books and leaflets

4.1 The council expects bus operators to provide timetable information in the form of a book and/or leaflets. The date of publication of books and leaflets will depend on the date that timetable changes occur or new services begin. The council will work with bus operators, as far as possible, to minimise the frequency of timetable changes and to agree a set of common service change dates for all operators.

4.2 Bus operators who are signed up to the Quality Partnership Scheme (QPS) need to conform to Annex 2 of the QPS, which sets out a maximum of six annual timetable change dates.

4.3 It is recognised that whilst leaflets can be replaced without major difficulty there could be problems keeping timetable books up-to-date. For minor timetable changes, amendment sheets are acceptable.

4.4 Where the council financially supports a bus service a different arrangement will apply.

4.5 In the case of a service that supplements an existing commercial bus service e.g. evenings and/or weekends, the relevant bus operator will be expected to include the relevant information in their timetable books and/or leaflets.

Examples of operator timetable booklets
4.6 In the case of a service that is wholly supported by the council and has no commercial element, the council will produce the necessary timetable books and/or leaflets.

Examples of timetable booklets produced by the council in recent years

4.7 When an operator does not fully meet the Traffic Commissioner’s registration requirements or fails to make timetable information available in accordance with 4.1, the council will consider stepping in to provide the information themselves and recover from the operator the reasonable cost of doing so.

4.8 In addition to timetable information for general use there are opportunities for special leaflets related to the promotion of bus services for particular groups of people, particular geographical areas or particular events. For example, timetable leaflets can be an essential tool in the preparation and implementation of travel plans.

4.9 Opportunities will be taken to ensure the distribution of council-produced timetable books and/or leaflets as appropriate. The distribution of leaflets may include the following outlets:

- council gateways and libraries
- tourist information centres
- on buses
- supermarkets
other retail outlets
cafes, restaurants and public houses
hospitals
health centres and doctors surgeries
schools and colleges
tourist attractions
village post offices

4.10 Care will be taken to ensure these outlets are kept up-to-date and well stocked.

4.11 From time-to-time the council may arrange door-to-door distribution in areas where new or revised council-supported bus services will operate. Similar door-to-door distribution could be undertaken by bus operators along commercial bus corridors.

4.12 Distribution can also be arranged through the post by Royal Mail or by paying for leaflets to be delivered with local newspapers and magazines.

4.13 Following consultation with disability and equality colleagues, timetable booklets and leaflets should generally be produced in line with the specifications outlined in 18.4
Service guides and maps

4.14 The council’s North Somerset Public Transport Guide (previously called the Travel Map) provides an overview of all bus services in the area, together with information about rail, park and ride and community transport services.

Examples of the Public Transport Guide in recent years
4.15 The guide includes the following information:

- places served
- bus routes, including community buses
- frequency of services
- location of bus stops in town centres
- operator information
- space to advertise particular services, ticketing options or other modes of public transport
- information about rail services
- information about community transport
- information about bus services to Bristol Airport
- provision of low floor buses

4.16 This is a free publication and is distributed widely throughout North Somerset and beyond.

4.17 The council’s objective is to publish an updated version of the Public Transport Guide, or equivalent publication, each April. This will be subject to available funding.

4.18 The council will review whether the Public Transport Guide remains the most appropriate and cost-effective format for providing public transport information. Options to consider include:

- reducing the print quantity and distribution of the guide
- introducing a charge for copies of the guide
- producing a series of smaller town and area maps/guides
- replacing the guide with interactive online mapping and service information
- utilising smartphone applications, such as the Bus Checker app

4.19 Bus operators may choose to produce their own service guides and maps.
Roadside information displays

Bus stop displays

5.1 At April 2013, there were some 1,300 bus stops in North Somerset (Traveline data). The majority of these are owned and maintained by the council, with the remaining stops owned by town and parish councils.

5.2 Of this total, some 600 (46%) are provided with roadside information displays, fixed either to bus stops poles or shelters.

5.3 The council will seek to increase the proportion of bus stops with information displays year-on-year and respond positively to requests from the public and bus operators and respond to new developments and circumstances.

Timetable displays at bus stops and shelters

5.4 The council will focus attention on:

- ensuring a minimum of 50% of bus stops in urban areas have roadside information displays and a minimum of 40% in rural areas
- providing an even spread of timetable information along each bus route, focusing on the most used bus stops
- ensuring maintenance of bus stops so that displays remain legible as far as practical
5.5 Roadside information displays are a basic source of information for users. The following information should be included and kept up-to-date:

- name of stop, usually in the format of “Locality, Landmark/road junction”
  e.g. Worle, Health Centre
- stop identifier if applicable e.g. Stop A
- NaPTAN number
- bus service number/s
- times of buses departing from stop
- direction of travel, destination and key timing points
- contact telephone number and email address
- Traveline information, including SMS code

5.6 In addition, bus service information and bus stop maps will be provided in key locations, usually where space allows on the reverse of a timetable case.
5.7 Where space allows, public transport information and/or promotions will be provided within the timetable display.

5.8 The council will seek a high standard specification for new timetable cases and a satisfactory maintenance regime, including inspection and cleaning. Damage due to vandalism or general wear and tear will be promptly rectified.

The key features of a roadside timetable display

**Bus stop flags**

5.9 Bus stop flags provide potential passengers with basic information on where to board or alight from their bus.

5.10 The council will seek to improve the standard of flags along bus route, including the replacement of old or damaged flags.

A standard bus stop flag, showing the operator logo for First
5.11 Standard bus stop flags should display the following information:
- name of bus stop and/or location
- stop identifier if applicable e.g. Stop A
- standard bus stop image
- Traveline information

5.12 The following information could also be included on a discretionary basis:
- bus service number/s
- bus operator name or logo

5.13 As part of the Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN), branded flags were created for bus stops along GBBN bus routes between Weston-super-Mare and Bristol and Portishead and Bristol. The design and content of these bus stop flags was agreed by the four West of England authorities to ensure a uniform approach on all GBBN bus routes. GBBN bus stop flags do not include operator information.

An example of the GBBN style bus stop flag
Face-to-face contact

Bus drivers

6.1 The bus driver is often a passenger’s first point of contact. The council therefore expects all bus drivers to be friendly, helpful and polite to passengers and ensure a high standard of customer care is maintained.

6.2 The council’s aspirations are that bus drivers will have sound knowledge of the bus route they are driving as well as the operator’s other services and possibly general knowledge of the local area.

6.3 Bus drivers may also have a supply of local bus timetable books and/or leaflets available at the request of passengers.

A passenger receiving information from a bus driver on Long Ashton Park and Ride

Bus stations and travel shops

6.4 Travel shops are seen as an important means of achieving face-to-face contact between bus operators and their passengers. They can provide over-the-counter travel information and advice, timetable leaflets and ticketing services.

6.5 First run a travel shop on High Street in Weston-super-Mare, where passengers can visit for information about any First service and also for information about National Express coaches. First also operate a similar travel shop at Bristol Bus Station, where a number of bus services to North Somerset depart.

6.6 Bakers Dolphin has a travel shop in the Sovereign Centre in Weston-super-Mare. Although this shop is primarily for information about holidays and day trips with Bakers Dolphin, information about their bus services in North Somerset is also available.
Council gateways

6.7 There are council gateways, open to the general public, at the following locations:

- Council reception at Town Hall, Weston-super-Mare
- Council reception at Castlewood, Clevedon
- The Campus, Locking Castle, Weston-super-Mare
- Clevedon library
- Congresbury library
- For All Healthy Living Centre library, Bournville, Weston-super-Mare
- Long Ashton library
- Nailsea library
- Pill library
- Portishead library
- Weston-super-Mare library (based at the Town Hall)
- Winscombe library
- Worle library
- Yatton library

6.8 These gateways provide an opportunity for face-to-face contact with the general public and can provide timetable leaflets and other information. They are also able to pass on requests or complaints directly to the public transport team.
Telephone and SMS services

Traveline telephone enquiry service

7.1 High priority is put on making accurate timetable information available via the national Traveline telephone enquiry number 0871 200 22 33. The service in North Somerset is delivered through the regional call centre in Exeter set up as part of the South West Public Transport Initiative (SWPTI), a partnership between local authorities and bus operators. The call centre receives thousands of calls each month from members of the public with queries about bus timetables across the South West.

7.2 All bus operators are expected to participate in Traveline through the timely provision of registration information (see 3.8) and payment of telephone enquiry charges. Where an operator is not a partner in SWPTI the council will recoup a sum from that operator towards the cost of operating Traveline. This sum will be assessed by SWPTI and based on the number of enquiries received by Traveline relating to that operator’s services.

A passenger calls the Traveline telephone enquiry service from the bus stop
**SMS service**

7.3 Traveline’s SMS service allows passengers to receive bus times to their mobile phones.

7.4 Every bus stop in North Somerset has a unique SMS code that passengers can text to Traveline at their standard network rate. The times of the next three buses are then received as a text message.

7.5 Times of buses equipped with real time information will appear as the estimated number of minutes before the bus arrives e.g. 10 minutes. This allows passengers to know if their bus is running late.

7.6 For buses not equipped with real time information, the time will appear as the scheduled time, according to the timetable held on the Traveline database e.g. 1845.

7.7 The codes for this SMS service can be found on roadside timetable displays. Passengers can use the code at the bus stop or save the code of their local bus stop to use elsewhere.
Internet services
(Internet, email and social media)

8.1 Bus passengers are increasingly using the internet to find information about bus services.

8.2 A number of different types of website are available, including those run by the council, bus operators and other transport organisations.

8.3 Microsites may also be developed for specific bus services and are useful for marketing purposes.

Council website

8.4 The North Somerset Council website (www.n-somerset.gov.uk) is the main web resource for all council information. The "bus travel" pages on the council’s website received over 4,500 page views in May 2014, with over 2,800 unique visitors.

8.5 Shortcuts can be set up for marketing purposes, to reduce the length of a web address and make it easier for the public to access a specific web page. For example, the shortcut www.n-somerset.gov.uk/bus takes customers directly to the council web pages with information about buses and other travel options.

8.6 We will aim to keep the web pages on the council’s website as up-to-date and relevant as possible.

North Somerset Council homepage
8.7 The council’s web pages include information about:

- bus infrastructure, such as bus stops and shelters
- bus timetables
- latest service changes
- Greater Bristol Bus Network
- community transport
- diamond travelcard bus pass

**Traveline website**

8.8 The Traveline website (www.traveline.info) and its local equivalent (www.travelinesw.com) are also popular resources for bus passengers.

8.9 As well as downloadable timetables, there is a journey planner function that includes public transport, coach and rail options.
Travel West website

8.10 Through projects such as the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF), there has been the opportunity to develop a website that covers the whole of the West of England. This website is Travel West (www.travelwest.info).

8.11 Although this site is still in development, it will eventually include public transport information from all four local authorities in the West of England area. This information will include downloadable timetables, route maps, a journey planner and real time information.

8.12 It is also planned that Travel West will incorporate the Accessible Transport Information website (www.accessible-transport.com), previously known as Getting About Greater Bristol.

Operator websites

8.13 Most bus operators have their own websites, although the information varies.

8.14 Some operators have created microsites for specific bus services.
Case study:

From 2012 to 2013, Bakers Dolphin operated two supported bus services for the council, known as Buzz 121 and 66 Hopper. Bakers Dolphin set up dedicated microsites for these services at:

- www.buzzbus.co.uk
- www.hopperbus.co.uk

Passengers could use these sites to find out information about the route, timetable and fares. Microsites about specific routes can be help promote brand image and loyalty from passengers.

Smartphones and apps

8.15 The council will seek to make the best use of new technologies, such as smartphones and apps.

8.16 Some bus information applications are already available to purchase, such as Nextbuses, which uses Traveline data. Operators First and The Kings Ferry have their own apps.

8.17 As part of the ongoing work to develop the Travel West website, a complimentary Bus Checker app (www.travelwest.info/buschecker) has been developed to provide route and timetable information, as well a live bus updates.
Recent improvements to the layout of North Somerset Council’s website allow it to be viewed more easily on a smartphone.

The council will also seek to provide QR codes on publicity, where appropriate, to allow passengers to easily navigate to information such as bus timetable downloads.

**Email**

There is now a dedicated public transport email address (public.transport@n-somerset.gov.uk). Passengers can use this address to submit suggestions and comments via email. This email address is featured on all roadside timetable displays and the public transport guide.

Passengers can also submit suggestions via the normal channels on the council’s website.
Social media

8.22 The council has its own Facebook (www.facebook.com/northsomersetcouncil) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/NorthSomersetC) accounts, which can be used to communicate important messages relating to public transport.

8.23 Some bus operators use social media to keep passengers informed of service updates as well as for marketing purposes.

8.24 Twitter is often seen as the most suitable form of social media for public transport, particularly for services updates, as it allows short, simple, one-way messages to be communicated to passengers. However, communicating worthwhile messages in less than 140 characters can be a challenge.

Case study:

The council receive a high volume of comments and complaints from bus passengers about day to day problems and disruptions, such as late buses or road works. Social media website Twitter was trialled between July and November 2011 as a channel for providing live updates to passengers. Passengers were able to view messages about the services in the trial online or by “following” the council on Twitter. Messages included details of service disruption and timetable changes. Following the trial, the Twitter account was successfully transferred to the bus operator.
Local media

Press releases

9.1 The council will issue press releases to communicate important news stories. As well as appearing on the council website, these press releases will be sent to the editors of local publications.

9.2 The council also has its own Facebook and Twitter accounts (see 8.22), which can be used to provide information about changes to bus services, events, marketing campaigns etc.

Marketing and advertisements

9.3 When appropriate, the council may advertise in local media either by buying advertising space or paying for inserts (flyers or pocket timetable booklets).

9.4 The council may also use bus shelters and timetable cases to advertise services, in line with the rules of the publicity charging scheme (13.8).

Council publications

9.5 The council’s main media publication is North Somerset Life, which is distributed to all North Somerset households once a month.

9.6 North Somerset Life is the most cost-effective method of reaching all households in North Somerset and is often used to convey important information relating to bus services and to promote new initiatives.

9.7 Internal publications to staff, directorates and members can also be used for internal communications about bus services. For example, when the council moved into new offices at Castlewood in Clevedon, the staff newsletter “The Knowledge” was used to communicate public transport options for staff to reach the new offices.

Local radio and television

9.8 The council’s press office can liaise with local radio stations during periods of travel disruption to keep residents informed.

9.9 The council will use local radio as part of marketing campaigns as appropriate, usually within the West of England.

9.10 Press releases and press launch events may result in local news coverage. For example, for the launch of GBBN, reporters from BBC and ITV were invited to attend.
Case study:

Events can attract interest from local press, radio and television. The Greater Bristol Bus Network launch in March 2012 attracted a considerable amount of interest from local media and included a feature on ITV local news, as well as coverage in newspapers and radio. More recently in October 2013, a large press launch was arranged for the North Bristol Commuter Coach, operated by The Kings Ferry. Local press had the opportunity to interview councillors and business leaders about the service.

The launch of the Greater Bristol Bus Network in March 2012 and the launch of the North Bristol Commuter Coach service in October 2013
Real time information (RTI) displays

Bus stop displays

10.1 There are some 85 RTI units in North Somerset. These units were funded through schemes such as the Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN), the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) and the Better Bus Areas (BBA) Fund.

10.2 Each unit is installed at a bus stop and displays the number, destination and predicted time of arrival for the next two to three buses. This allows passengers to see exactly when their bus will arrive.

10.3 Real time information units also have the capability to communicate messages. For example, if a bus service is cancelled due to adverse weather conditions, a message could be displayed to warn passengers. The council will use this facility as appropriate to display messages across the network.

Real time information display screen at a bus stop in Weston-super-Mare

An RTI display is used to remind passengers that there are no buses on Christmas Day and to wish people a Merry Christmas
Interchange displays

10.4 In Weston-super-Mare town centre, an interchange display provides passengers with service information, including both scheduled departure times and real-time information. The display also directs passengers to the correct stop by indicating bay numbers, which can be located on the accompanying map. A similar display has also been installed in Clevedon town centre.

10.5 There is also an interchange display installed outside @Bristol in Hotwells, Bristol, which a number of North Somerset bus services (as well as the Park and Ride) are displayed on.
Audio information

10.6 As part of LSTF, a number of Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) audio fobs were purchased to be distributed to bus passengers who are blind or partially sighted, through Vision North Somerset.

10.7 The fobs trigger audio messages at bus stops fitted with RTI, with the location and information about the next three buses.

10.8 In 2014, the system was still being tested.

Data accuracy

10.9 It is the council’s responsibility to ensure that timetables and routes on Traveline are verified as correct in conjunction with the service registrations for all North Somerset bus services. The exception is First, who is responsible for the verification of their timetables in conjunction with the most recent registrations and to report any errors to Traveline.

10.10 VIX is the West of England’s contractor for real-time information technology. The council is also responsible for sending the verified timetable information to VIX so it can be displayed to the public. Operators are responsible for ensuring that all vehicle workings have been input into the dataset within 10 working days of the timetable change deadline.
On-board bus displays and bus branding

Route and destination displays

11.1 The bus operator is legally responsible for providing clear route and destination displays on their vehicles. These displays should also be illuminated at night.

11.2 The council will encourage bus operators to display route maps or diagrams inside vehicles.

On-board information displays

11.3 There are plans to equip buses in the West of England with on-board information displays, through the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and Better Bus Areas Fund. These displays will be used to show real time information about predicted arrival times, next bus stop displays and may also provide advertising space.

Branding

11.4 Some services are operated with route branding, where a route map and other service information is provided on the side of a vehicle. As long as branded vehicles are retained on the designated route, route branding can reduce uncertainty and promote bus use.

11.5 All bus operators have vehicles branded in their corporate colours. However, there have been a number of examples in recent years where bus services in North Somerset have been branded by route instead of operator. This means passengers can easily spot their bus arriving and helps to build a brand image for a bus service.
Case study:

The council worked with First to design the “X” branding, first used on service X1 between Weston-super-Mare and Bristol, and then rolled out a year later on services X2 and X3 between Portishead and Bristol. Recently, the council has also designed the “Link” branding for the new A2 bus service.

Other operators have also branded their services in North Somerset, including the SuperLink branding used by WebberBus when they operated in Weston-super-Mare. Bakers Dolphin used the distinctive 66 Hopper branding on council-supported service 66, when it operated in 2012/13.
Marketing initiatives and events

Marketing initiatives

12.1 From time to time, the council may run or support marketing initiatives to encourage greater use of local bus services and also support the long-term viability of public transport in North Somerset.

12.2 Marketing initiatives can also be used to raise public awareness of a new or improved bus service.

12.3 In the past, initiatives have included working with operators to produce and distribute new publicity material and/or discount vouchers to local residents.

Case study:

The new X1 service was launched in June 2012, with an improved 20 minute frequency and more modern buses, with wifi and leather seats. Following these improvements, a marketing campaign targeted commuters who could use the service to travel to work in Bristol.

Market research suggested that people in the service’s target market, who showed a high propensity to use public transport, also showed a high propensity for using local leisure centres. Road shows were therefore held at leisure centres along the route on weekday evenings, with timetable and route information, free day tickets and branded X1 water bottles.
Case study:

To celebrate the launch of the Greater Bristol Bus Network (GBBN), the four local authorities in the West of England launched the GBBN shelter trail in partnership with bus operator First. First offered a promotional family day ticket for £10 to encourage families to travel the 10 routes across the region and visit the 40 “special” bus shelters.

In North Somerset, 10 shelters were branded with local landmarks or themes, including strawberries at a shelter near the Strawberry Line cycle path and farmyard animals near Puxton Park. The shelter trail was promoted in conjunction with a competition to win an iPad.

“Special” shelters in Portishead and Congresbury

Events

12.4 As appropriate, the council will organise events to promote the use of bus services, sometimes alongside other sustainable travel options.

12.5 This may include small community events, such as community cafés or the “Safe and Warm” events to provide general information about local bus services and other sustainable travel options.

12.6 Alternatively, an event may be organised to promote a particular bus service or travel theme, for example, commuting to Bristol on the X1.
Events in North Somerset to promote bus services and provide potential passengers with information
Case study:

During the summer of 2012, the council worked with bus operator Bakers Dolphin to promote “days out on the 66 Hopper”. Events were held in Nailsea and Clevedon town centres with representatives from the council, Bakers Dolphin and also local attractions, such as Tyntesfield and Noah’s Ark Zoo Farm. A special timetable booklet was distributed to passers-by with suggested days out and discount vouchers for attractions along the route. During the course of the two events, the council spoke to hundreds of local people and the event helped to raise the profile of service 66 within local communities.
Roadside publicity scheme

General principles

13.1 Using powers allocated through the Transport Act 2000, North Somerset Council charge commercial bus operators for maintaining publicity at bus stops served by their services. This charge was first introduced in May 2009.

13.2 The council currently produces roadside publicity for all bus stops with a timetable display case in North Somerset, adopting a common standard for all information.

13.3 As a result of this scheme all bus operators running commercial bus services in North Somerset would be charged for each bus stop the council updates. The current scheme works on an annual charge, based on each operator’s route mileage. The council is happy to have liaison meetings with operators to discuss when and where timetables are displayed.

13.4 Copies of the scheme are available from the council on request.

How it works

13.5 The charge is calculated based on the cost of time and resources required to produce displays. The scheme is a not-for-profit exercise, designed to recoup public funds that have been used to publicise commercial business.

13.6 Costs taken into consideration include:
  - Staff time
  - Plotter paper
  - Laminate
  - Plotter ink
  - Double-sided tape
  - Fuel costs
  - Plotter and laminator maintenance
  - Omnibus software licences

Advertising

13.7 When appropriate, the council is able to make space available to advertise bus services on timetable displays in addition to timetables and where advertising is not considered anti-competitive. The decision on whether advertising would be appropriate lies with the council.
13.8 Advertising on roadside displays will only be accepted where space allows. Timetables will always be prioritised.

13.9 Bus operators, and other public transport providers, should contact the council to discuss advertising opportunities. Advertising will be charged on a case by case basis.

A roadside timetable with an advert for the WestonRider.
Quality Partnership Scheme (QPS)

14.1 The council has agreed a Quality Partnership Scheme (QPS) on two showcase bus corridors Weston-super-Mare to Bristol and Portishead to Bristol. First currently operate on these corridors and have signed up to the scheme.

14.2 The QPS is a partnership backed by statutory legislation between the council and operators for the above corridors aimed at pursuing a package of improvement and maintaining standards on the routes over a five year period.

14.3 The agreement includes some obligations on the council to provide bus information. These include:

- regularly maintain and clean bus shelters and bus information display cases
- repair damaged information cases promptly
- provide roadside publicity at the majority of stops
- observe the fixed change dates for any tendered services on the route
- organise regular liaison meetings with operators to co-ordinate bus services and publicity
- work with bus operators to provide RTI at key bus stops on the corridor

14.4 The obligations upon the operator are to:

- agree to a maximum of six common annual service change dates within the region (four fixed dates, two optional dates) to reduce the number of network or individual timetable changes
- operate newly registered services for a minimum period of time
- avoid changing individual local bus services more than twice in any twelve month period (excluding seasonal or educational term variations)
- work with the council to ensure that a fully functional RTI system is provided on the corridors and support the expansion of RTI both at on-street displays and through web-based applications
- display timetables and promotional information on buses for the route being operated and remove out-of-date information immediately
- display notices on all vehicles to announce forthcoming changes to fares and/or services
- work with the council in providing information in accordance with this bus information strategy
Service disruptions and alterations

Road closures

15.1 When road closures affect bus services, the council will work with bus operators to ensure they are fully informed of upcoming road closures and help with potential diversions.

15.2 The council will ensure that notices are displayed at affected bus stops prior to the closure to inform passengers of potential disruption to their journey. This information will be kept up-to-date throughout the closure and temporary bus stops will be installed if necessary. Where shuttle bus services or taxi schemes are used, timetables and/or booking information will also be displayed at bus stops and communicated to parish councils and other local interest groups.

Notice at a bus stop to warn passengers of a road closure

15.3 As appropriate, the council will use the messaging system on real time information displays to convey road closure information.

15.4 The council will work with bus operators to display information notices on buses or at Bristol Bus Station when appropriate.

15.5 The road works website, run by Elgin (www.northsomerset.roadworks.org), is available to inform the public of all upcoming road works and road closures.
Severe weather disruption

15.6 During periods of severe weather, such as snow or flooding, the council will update the council’s website (www.n-somerset.gov.uk/disruption) with links to the relevant bus operator websites.

15.7 Operators will be expected to update the council regularly about changes to services during severe weather and also provide information, where possible, on their own websites and social media.

15.8 The council may also update real time information displays as appropriate to let passengers know of potential disruptions to their journey.

Timetable changes

15.9 Operators are expected to publicise changes to timetables and/or routes on their buses and their website in advance of any timetable change.

15.10 When appropriate, the council may choose to publicise changes to supported bus services at bus stops (in line with other marketing activities) and/or on the council’s web site.
Interchanges and major destinations

16.1 Information at interchanges and major destinations can highlight the availability of bus services and encourage greater use of public transport, provided that it is clear, simple and easily accessible at night as well as in the daytime. Information should, if possible, include bus route and/or bus stop maps as well as signage directing people to bus stops.

Shopping centres

16.2 We will identify opportunities to work with shopping centres and key retail stores to provide local travel information and to promote the use of bus services. This may include timetable information or bespoke maps.

16.3 Where appropriate, the council will work with shopping centres to develop travel plans to promote alternatives to the car.

Bus and railway stations

16.4 The council will work with bus operators and other local authorities to ensure that satisfactory information about North Somerset bus services is available at the bus stations in Bristol, Bath, Bridgwater and Wells.

16.5 First Great Western produces onward journey information at all railway stations in North Somerset, as part of an agreement with the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC). These railway stations are Weston-super-Mare, Weston Milton, Worle, Yatton and Nailsea and Backwell. The council will work with First Great Western to ensure this information is up to date.

16.6 In addition to the ATOC onward journey displays, the council will work with the managers of individual railway stations to provide more detailed information, such as bus timetable displays or leaflets at stations as appropriate.

Hospitals

16.7 The council will seek opportunities to work with local health organisations and hospitals to disseminate information about bus services to staff, patients and visitors.

16.8 This may include the provision of timetable booklets and/or leaflets, improving information on each individual organisation’s website or by producing on-site bus service information displays.

Schools and colleges

16.9 The council will also seek opportunities to work with schools and colleges in North Somerset to promote bus travel to staff and students.
Bristol Airport

16.10 Bristol Airport is located within North Somerset. The Bristol Airport Expansion Plan includes funding for improved public transport services. A Public Transport Steering Group for the airport has been set up to co-ordinate these improvements.

16.11 Currently, four bus services operate to and from the airport. These are services 121 from Weston-super-Mare to Bristol, A4 from Bath city centre to the airport, the Airport Flyer service A1 that operates from Bristol city centre every 10 minutes, and the new A2 service linking local villages and railway stations to the airport. Greyhound coach service 100 also connects the airport to Wales.

16.12 The council will seek to improve the bus information available at the airport. This will be delivered with funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

16.13 Bristol Airport has introduced a concessionary travel scheme for residents in the local community, entitling them to subsidised travel on the Airport Flyer express bus services between Bristol Airport and Bristol city centre. The scheme applies to anyone living permanently at a property in the postcode areas BS40, BS48 or BS49. Information about this scheme is available on the Bristol Airport website at www.bristolairport.co.uk/about-us/community
Fares information

17.1 Due to the frequently changing nature of bus fares it is often not feasible to publish fares for individual bus services as this poses the risk of out-of-date information.

Ticket options

17.2 Operators are expected to make information available online about as many ticket options on their services as possible. First have recently introduced fares information when using their app to plan a bus journey.

Special fares

17.3 The council will publicise multi-operator and multi-modal tickets where possible.

17.4 Recent examples include tickets sold by the West of England Bus Operators Association (WEBOA), who offer a suite of multi-operator commercial ticket options, including the Avon Rider and Weston Rider.

17.5 Other multi-modal examples include the Plus Bus scheme, which operates in Weston-super-Mare, and also the Freedom Travelpass.

The “Diamond Travelcard” bus pass

17.6 Information about the Diamond Travelcard is made available at council gateways, libraries, the council’s website and in the two Diamond Travelcard booklets for 60+ and disabled applications.

17.7 In May 2014, a more accessible online portal was launched to process Diamond Travelcard applications and provide further information about the service.
Accessible information

18.1 The Joint Local Transport Plan aims to increase mobility, accessibility and social inclusion by promoting access to everyday facilities for all and implementing measures that assist people with impaired mobility. The particular needs of mobility impaired people need to be taken into account in providing bus service information as well as those of parents with young children and the elderly.

18.2 All publications produced by the council are available in other formats and languages and details should be printed on all publications, including contact details. The wording used on all printed literature is: “Council documents can be made available in large print, audio, easy read and other formats. Documents on our website can also be emailed to you as plain text files. Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.”

18.3 The council’s Accessible Information Guide 2008 states that all printed documents should be produced with a minimum 12-point type size in the Arial typeface or similar sans serif typeface.

18.4 More specifically, as agreed with disability and equality colleagues, the design of timetable booklets and leaflets should generally be produced in line with the following specifications:

- no smaller than A5 or 21 column landscape format
- upright, lower case, sans serif print typeface of medium weight with minimum 8 point (although it is the council’s policy to provide information in no smaller than 12 point)
- typeface to be in the largest size that circumstances allow, with a minimum of 8 point (although it is the council’s policy to provide information in no smaller than 12 point)
- print in black (red and green to be avoided)
- grey shading and coloured tint to be avoided (other than pale yellow)
- 24 hour clock to be used
- timing points to include immediate or interchange stops
- times should read down page
- details of how to contact operator
- Traveline information
- maps/diagrams of bus stop locations, routes and, where appropriate, direction of travel
- details of supported bus services
- concessionary travel information
- space for advertising interchange with other modes
18.5 Timetable information can be made available on audio cassette upon request. Also, the Traveline telephone service offers an alternative to printed or web based bus information.

18.6 In 2014, audio fobs were being tested to trigger audio messages at bus stops installed with RTI displays.

**Case study:**

Safe travel cards were designed so that passengers can let their bus driver know that they need extra help when making a journey by bus. The cards are printed with simple instructions or requests for the bus driver, such as asking the driver to speak louder because the passenger is hard of hearing. The cards allow passengers to let the driver know these requests in a private and discreet way that will not cause them embarrassment. There are also blank spaces for passengers to fill in details of their journey or destination.

![Safe travel cards and wallets](image)
Community Transport

18.7 There are some 24 organisations throughout North Somerset that operate community transport services and car schemes.

18.8 The council will aim to update and publish the Community Transport Directory (or similar) every year, with details of the three main community transport providers, Weston and District Community Transport, Nailsea and District Community Transport and Congresbury Community Transport as well as contact details for all other community minibus and car schemes throughout the county.
Diamond Travelcard

18.9 Diamond Travelcard bus passes are available to people who can demonstrate they have an eligible disability or are unable to drive for medical reasons.

18.10 More information can be found in the Diamond Travelcard Disabled Application Form, which can be requested in large print or other formats, or on the council’s website.
Consultation

19.1 A draft of this bus information strategy was supplied to the following people, organisations or groups for consultation:

- Marketing and Communications Manager, North Somerset Council
- Equality and Diversity Manager, North Somerset Council
- Access Officer for Disabled People, North Somerset Council
- Planning Manager Adult Care, North Somerset Council

19.2 A public consultation with local residents, parish councils and bus operators was conducted from 28 January to 14 March 2014.

19.3 Comments received during this consultation process have influenced this final version.
Monitoring and review

20.1 The contents of this bus information strategy will be reviewed against current practices every two years, with a new version of the strategy consulted on and published every four years.

139 Information about bus services

(1) Each local transport authority must from time to time determine, having regard to their local transport plan—

(a) what local bus information should be made available to the public (“the required information”), and

(b) the way in which it should be made available (“the appropriate way”).

(2) Before making such a determination, the authority must consult—

(a) such organisations appearing to the authority to be representative of users of local services as they think fit, and

(b) the traffic commissioner for the traffic area covering their area.

(3) Each authority must from time to time ascertain whether the required information is being made available to the public in the appropriate way.

(4) Subsection (5) applies if an authority consider that—

(a) the required information is not being made available to the public to any extent, or

(b) that information is not being made available to the public in the appropriate way.

(5) If this subsection applies, the authority must seek to make arrangements with the operators of the local services concerned under which those operators agree to make the information available (or to make it available in that way).

(6) In this section “local bus information”, in relation to a local transport authority, means—

(a) information about routes and timetabling of local services to, from and within the authority’s area,

(b) information about fares for journeys on such local services, and

(c) such other information about facilities for disabled persons, travel concessions, connections with other public passenger transport services or other matters of value to the public as the authority consider appropriate in relation to their area.
Council documents can be made available in large print, audio, easy read and other formats. Documents on our website can also be emailed to you as plain text files. Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English.

For more information please phone: 01934 426 711 or email: public.transport@n-somerset.gov.uk