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**To: Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)**

**Date: 19 February 2025**

**Subject: Consultation on Bus Franchising Options**

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## **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 This note provides background information for Members of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) on Transport for West Midlands' (TfWM) proposal to introduce a Franchising system for bus services across the region. It follows a briefing session for all Members with TfWM, which was held on 3 February.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) is recommended to:
- 1) Consider the proposals to introduce Franchising for bus services in the West Midlands.
  - 2) Provide any feedback to TfWM officers on the proposals, to be considered as part of the consultation process.
  - 3) Make any recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change for incorporation into the Council's written response to the consultation.

## **3 Background and Information**

- 3.1 TfWM is the Local Transport Authority for the West Midlands, with overall responsibility for the bus network across the region. However, the services themselves are run by commercial operators from the private sector, with National Express being by far the largest operator in the region.
- 3.2 At present, the West Midlands has a 'deregulated' bus network. This means that where services are run on a commercial basis, it is the operators themselves (rather than TfWM) who are responsible for determining routes, timetables and quality standards.
- 3.3 TfWM is currently carrying out a public consultation on proposals to introduce Bus Franchising across the region. Under a Franchising system, it would be TfWM who planned the network and then awarded contracts to bus operators, paying them to run services.

- 3.4 The public consultation opened on 6 January and will run until 30 March. Coventry City Council is a statutory consultee and Council officers will be preparing a corporate response to the consultation. TfWM are also seeking responses from our residents. The Councils' Communications Team is engaged and is sharing the consultation materials with our residents.
- 3.5 Details of the consultation are available via TfWM's website at <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/consultations/bus-reform/>. The consultation materials include more detailed explanations of what franchising would entail, how much it would cost, what TfWM expects the benefits to be and how and when it would be implemented, as well as how to respond to the consultation. A seminar for all Members was held on these elements of the consultation on 3 February, while two sets of FAQs have also been provided as appendices to this report.
- 3.6 The West Midlands Combined Authority expects to make a final decision on whether or not to implement Franchising in May, following completion of the consultation. If approved, bus services in Coventry would be franchised in 2027.

#### **4 Health Inequalities Impact**

- 4.1 TfWM have carried out a Health and Equity Assessment of the proposal to proceed with Franchising. The assessment has been published as part of the consultation materials and is available at <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/media/sajdpzou/health-and-equity-impact-assessment-west-midlands-bus-franchising-assessment.pdf>

Appendix 1: General Franchising FAQ's

Appendix 2: Stakeholder FAQ's

David Pipe  
Senior Officer, Transport Strategy  
Coventry City Council  
[David.pipe@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:David.pipe@coventry.gov.uk)