

1 Thurrock Enhanced Partnership Scheme 1

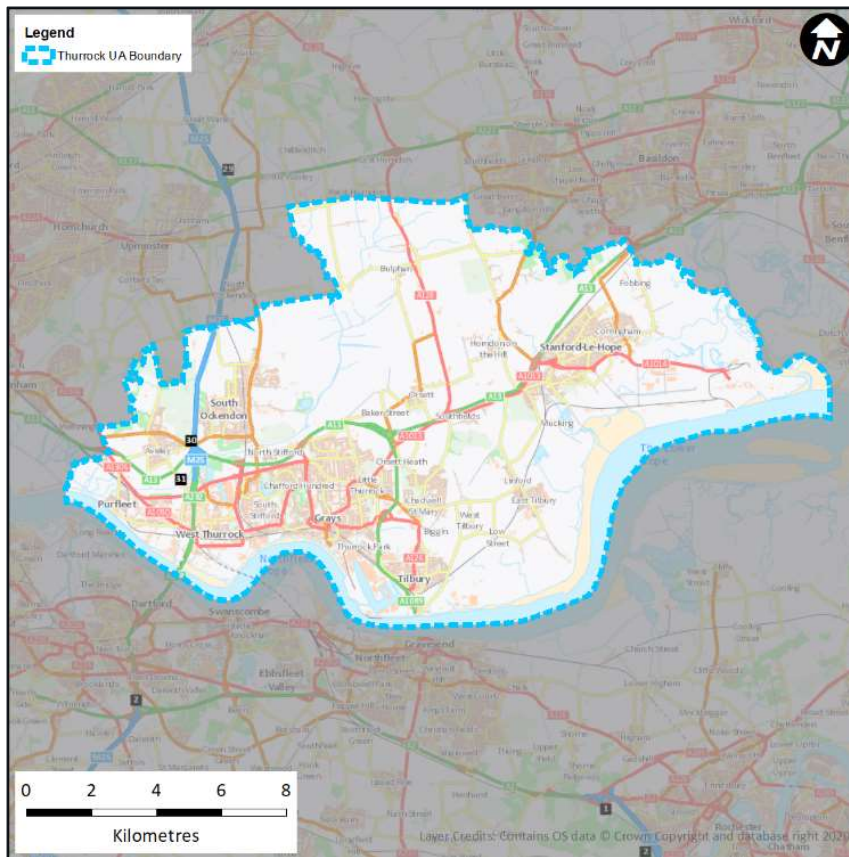
Introduction

- 1.1 The Enhanced Partnership (EP) Scheme 1 is made on 01 March 2024 by Thurrock Council (EP Scheme 1).
- 1.2 It will remain in place while the Thurrock Enhanced Partnership Plan is in place, or until Thurrock Council decides to terminate this scheme.
- 1.3 EP Scheme 1 is reviewed annually (by 1st April), the same frequency as Thurrock's Bus Service Improvement Plan, with the objective of ensuring that EP Scheme 1 continues to meet the needs of the travelling public, Thurrock Council's transport strategies and the bus operators' needs.
- 1.4 Thurrock Council has undertaken an assessment of the impacts of the EP Scheme 1 on competition and believes that it can be achieved without any significantly adverse effect on competition, for the purposes of Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000.
- 1.5 References to any legislation are to be construed as references to that legislation as from time to time amended or to any legislation from time to time replacing, extending, consolidating or amending the same.

Extent & Application

- 1.6 EP Scheme 1 covers the full administrative unitary authority area of Thurrock Council as shown below. This scheme covers the same area as the EP Plan.

Figure 1.1: Administrative boundary of Thurrock unitary authority area



1.7 EP Scheme 1 applies to all local registered bus services¹ operating in Thurrock, except:

1. Any registered local bus service where all journeys only operate on school or college days
2. Any registered local bus service which is an excursion or tour²
3. Any service that has 10% or less of its overall distance (not just the distance within the scheme area) registered as a local bus service

¹ For the benefit of doubt, this includes TfL contracted local bus services in Thurrock

² As defined in section 137(1) of the 1985 Transport Act.

2 Facilities, Measures and Requirements of EP Scheme 1

Introduction

2.1 This section describes the requirements of EP Scheme 1 stating:

- Facilities and measures provided by Thurrock Council
- Requirements that need to be met by operators of local bus services in Thurrock.

Facilities and Measures

2.2 Thurrock Council arranges the provision and maintenance of:

1. Bus lanes:
 - i. at London Road at junction with Askews Farm Lane, South Stifford
 - ii. at High Road, North Stifford
 - iii. at Stifford Road, entering Aveley
 - iv. Linking Meadow Drive and Park Lane, Aveley
2. Bus/rail interchange facilities at the following railway stations:
 - i. Grays
 - ii. Chafford Hundred
 - iii. Ockendon
3. bus stops with a sign plate in accordance with the regulations
4. a minimum of 160 passenger shelters at bus stops or a minimum of 25% of bus stops to have passenger shelters (whichever is the greater)
5. operational real time passenger information systems at a minimum of 33 bus stops
6. a timetable case at every stop
7. a bus stop box repainting programme that ensures visibility of the boxes

2.3 Thurrock Council also provides, or causes to be provided:

1. paper timetables for financially supported services;
2. publicly accessible racks for council and operator produced paper timetables, ensuring that these are stocked, at:
 - i. Libraries
 - ii. Tourist Information Centres
 - iii. Council Offices
 - iv. Other Council buildings with a public facing function
3. a bus information website with links to operators' timetables and details of service changes;
4. punctuality monitoring at a minimum of 11 locations for a total of at least 21 hours per month;
5. parking enforcement at bus stops and other facilities where the need arises;
6. advance information and engagement with bus operators concerning planned and permitted roadworks within Thurrock;
7. Implementation of Bus Stop Suspensions;

2.4 Thurrock Council commits to seeking prices for low emission buses in all local bus service tenders it offers.

Operator Requirements

- 2.5 To operate any registered local bus service in the EP Scheme 1 area (see paragraph 1.6), except those specified in paragraph 1.7, bus operators must:
1. use digital or roller blind destination displays with the correct information displayed;
 2. provide information on their websites and to other appropriate media services covering:
 - i. current planned timetables;
 - ii. real time information on current running;
 - iii. fares for all products, including all single and return prices offered;
 - iv. 7 days' advance notice of planned fare and timetable changes;
 3. provide hard-copy timetables for commercial and partially commercial services;
 4. provide access to printed timetables on their buses or at stops;
 5. provide printed timetables to Thurrock Council for stocking publicly accessible information racks (to meet paragraph 2.3 2 above). Operators of services wholly operated under contract to a local transport authority are exempt from this requirement.
 6. endeavour to provide updates to customers at times of delay;
 7. maintain and publicise a Customer Charter, or equivalent policy, which, as a minimum:
 - i. encourages customer feedback, both positive and negative, in a variety of channels;
 - ii. promises to acknowledge receipt of any customer communication at the earliest opportunity;
 - iii. provides an appropriate full reply to the customer in a reasonable timeframe;
 - iv. offers refunds and/or compensation if appropriate; and
 - v. undertakes to use customer feedback as part of their review processes for future service improvements.
 8. ensure that buses used to provide local bus services are kept clean and presentable both inside and out, as well as being fit for purpose;
 9. ensure that all staff dealing or likely to deal with the public are helpful, polite, smartly dressed, and are suitably trained;
- 2.6 Operators must also work closely with Thurrock Council to:
1. hold regular general liaison discussions, to include, but not be limited to:
 - i. the operation of this Scheme; and
 - ii. raise issues with the bus network at the earliest opportunity;
 2. provide 20 days' advance notice of permanent registration changes before the formal submission date to Thurrock Council under current legislation;
 - i. Note that the provision of advance notice does not have to include the final details of the changes concerned
 3. provide information for Thurrock Council real time information systems;

3 Scheme Management

Governance and Review

- 3.1 Thurrock EP Scheme 1 is subject to the Governance and review arrangements laid down in the Thurrock Enhanced Partnership Plan.

Variation

- 3.2 Following discussions with operators and approval by the Oversight Group and subject to paragraph 3.7 below, Thurrock Council may draft proposals that add:
- further facilities and measures to those listed in paragraph 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4; and/or
 - further requirements on operators to those listed in paragraph 2.5 and 2.6.
- 3.3 Thurrock Council will give written notice to all operators of local registered bus services of such proposals together with local transport authorities procuring local registered bus services in Thurrock where that authority retains all revenue.
- 3.4 The items will be added to this EP Scheme 1 provided no operators object within 14 days of receiving the notification from Thurrock Council.
- 3.5 In the event that any objections are received, the changes will not be implemented and the Oversight Group will consider:
- i. making amendments and resubmitting the proposals to operators;
 - ii. applying the bespoke variation mechanism set out in paragraph 3.6.
- 3.6 Where the Oversight Group decides to apply the bespoke variation mechanism, Thurrock Council will apply the statutory objection mechanism as set out in The Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018 (**Objections Regulations**) shall apply, but with the following amendments:
- for so long a Controlling Authority³ operates local bus services into Thurrock and the amendments to the EP Scheme 1 affect the local bus services operated by that Controlling Authority, that Controlling Authority shall be treated as an "operator" under the Objections Regulations for the purposes of the objection mechanism; and
 - and where the objection of any Controlling Authority is deemed to be a "sufficient number" under the Objections Regulations, Thurrock Council shall not implement such amendments to the EP Scheme 1.
- 3.7 In respect of any local registered bus services procured by a Controlling Authority and where that authority retains all the revenue from that service, Thurrock Council may, on request from the neighbouring authority, agree to exempt those services from any variation to the operator requirements of the EP Scheme 1.

³ As defined in the Thurrock EP Plan

Sanctions

3.8 Any operator of a qualifying local registered bus service who fails to meet the requirements of the EP Scheme 1 will:

- in the first instance be asked to meet Thurrock Council to informally discuss the circumstances surrounding the points of concern;
- if this does not result in material improvements, be required by Thurrock Council to produce, in a timely manner, an action plan explaining how and by when the operator will put in place measures so that it can meet the requirements of the EP Scheme 1⁴; then
- only if this second step does not result in the requirements being met, Thurrock Council will request that the relevant local bus registration authority takes the appropriate action which could include cancelling the operator's local bus service registration(s) for the services on which the requirements are not met.
 - Notwithstanding this paragraph, Thurrock Council will make every effort to work with the operator to avoid the need to involve the registration authority.

3.9 If Thurrock Council fails to provide any measures or facilities, Thurrock Council will:

- in the first instance be asked to meet the Oversight Group to informally discuss the circumstances surrounding the points of concern;
- if this does not result in material improvements, be required by the Oversight Group to produce, in a timely manner, an action plan explaining how and by when Thurrock Council will put in place measures so that it can provide the measures and facilities laid down in this EP Scheme 1;
- if this action plan does not result in the provision of the measures and facilities, Thurrock Council will convene the Oversight Group to discuss amendments or cancellation of the EP Scheme 1 as considered appropriate by the Oversight Group.

⁴ The action plan may be amended and/or the timescale adjusted by agreement with Thurrock Council