Bringing Scotland's bus network back into public control - Motion as adjusted approved.

12 Councillor Angus Millar, seconded by Councillor Richard Bell, moved that

"Council welcomes the recent commitment by First Minister John Swinney that the Scottish Government will bring Scotland's bus network back into public control, through franchising and regulation, by the end of the current parliamentary term.

Council notes that at the most recent Glasgow City Council elections in 2022, 83 out of 85 councillors elected stood on manifesto commitments supporting the exploration of bus franchising for Glasgow. Council recalls its subsequent approval of the 2022 Bus Governance Route Map, which formally adopted this position as Council policy.

Council believes that franchising presents significant opportunities to improve bus services in the city - for example through tackling network gaps to connect more parts of Glasgow, addressing frequency issues, and ensuring greater affordability. Council further believes that this can build on existing progress to date, including the extension of concessionary travel to more people across Scotland and the recent roll-out of the £2 fare cap across Greater Glasgow.

Council welcomes the ongoing work being undertaken by SPT as part of its Regional Bus Strategy to advance a Franchising Assessment and framework for Glasgow and the wider Region. Council calls on the Scottish Government to support this process as a priority and to set out an accelerated pathway with financial support to enable franchising in Greater Glasgow to be taken forward as an early deliverable of its national rollout.

Council further welcomes ongoing partnership working via the Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership to take forward improvements to bus services, and recognises the vital role of bus operators in securing a successful bus network for Glasgow. Council notes that bus operators will be integral to any franchising system and to delivering on set aims and outcomes. Council further supports the exploration of a publicly run bus operator as part of a future franchising system, but notes that any municipal or regional operator would require significant business case development and national financial support.

Council therefore requests that the City Convener for Climate, Transport and City Centre Recovery write to the Scottish Government to confirm Glasgow's support for franchising and to commit the Council to work with the Scottish Government to deliver improvements for Glasgow's buses."

Councillor Kieran Turner, seconded by Bailie Marie Garrity, moved as an amendment that:-

(1) in the 3rd paragraph, remove:

"Council further believes that this can build on existing progress to date, including the extension of concessionary travel to more people across Scotland and the recent roll-out of the £2 fare cap across Greater Glasgow."

(2) following this, insert a new paragraph, to read:

"Council notes the successful implementation of franchised bus services through the Labour-led Bee Network in Greater Manchester, which has become the first city-region outside London to bring its bus network under local control, delivering integrated ticketing, simplified fares and greater local accountability. Council further notes that Greater Manchester introduced a £2 bus fare cap prior to the introduction of the national fare cap scheme in England and believes that valuable lessons can be learned from this experience as bus franchising is developed in the Glasgow City Region."

(3) after the paragraph beginning with "Council welcomes the ongoing work being undertaken by SPT" insert a new paragraph to read:

"Council further believes that the successful implementation of bus franchising will require long-term financial certainty, clear governance arrangements and a published timetable for delivery to ensure that passengers experience tangible improvements in reliability, accessibility and affordability."

(4) after the paragraph beginning with: "Council further welcomes ongoing partnership working via the Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership" insert a new paragraph to read:

"Council calls on the Scottish Government, SPT and regional partners to publish a clear implementation pathway for bus franchising in the Glasgow City Region, including anticipated timescales, governance arrangements and the financial resources required to support successful delivery."

Bailie Christy Mearns, seconded by Councillor Elaine Gallagher, moved as an amendment that:-

(1) at the end of paragraph 2 ending "…its national rollout.", insert a paragraph to read:

"Council also calls on the Scottish Government to clarify that it supports a regional approach to franchising and that while its wider Public Service Reform activity may provide an opportunity to further integrate transport powers at a regional level, this must not disrupt or delay Glasgow's regional approach to franchising. Council also calls on the Scottish Government to address inconsistencies within the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, particularly the panel process, through the Better Buses Bill or other means, to speed up the franchising development process."

(2) insert an additional paragraph after paragraph 2 to read:

"Council recalls its commitment in its strategic plan in 2022 to support the delivery of integrated, tap on/off ticketing across different transport modes and providers, and regrets that limited progress has been made towards achieving this aim. Council agrees that integrated ticketing must be advanced urgently, alongside the franchising framework assessment, to enable passengers to easily and more cheaply choose multi-mode travel in Glasgow, as already happens in many other major cities."

(3) in paragraph 3 after "…aims and outcomes.", replace the rest of the paragraph with:

"Council recognises the additional benefit in terms of oversight, accountability and value for public money that can come from having a publicly-run bus operator as part of a future franchising system, and supports further development of this opportunity, but notes that any municipal or regional operator would require significant business case development and national financial support."

(4) insert an additional paragraph after paragraph 3:

"Council expresses disappointment at the recent announcement from the Transport Secretary that the Scottish Government is no longer taking forward work to clarify the legal powers available to Councils in respect of road user charging, noting this could have created a dedicated revenue stream to invest in strengthening the public bus network, including funding the development of a municipal bus company. Council calls on the Transport Secretary to reconsider this decision, which is counter to the commitment to local empowerment in the Verity House Agreement and risks holding back progress on bus transformation."

Councillor Dan Hutchison, seconded by Councillor Seonad Hoy, moved as an amendment to:-

(1) insert a penultimate paragraph to read:

"Council celebrates the success of the introduction of free bus travel up to the age of 21 and welcomes the significant increase in bus usage across the city as a result of this measure. Council also celebrates the restriction of bus fares to £2 and believes that this will also have strong social and economic benefits in our city. Council believes that these are positive steps to making the city more accessible, increasing citizen motility and limits the rip-off pricing that was seen across the city. Council further believes that the Scottish Government should commit to increasing the free bus travel measures as a next step following their £2 bus fare commitment and commitment to bringing public transport into public control by introducing free bus travel for those aged 22-60."

During the debate, Councillor Millar, Councillor Turner, Bailie Mearns and Councillor Hutchison, with the approval of their seconders, agreed to combine their motion and amendments resulting in the following adjusted motion:-

“Council welcomes the recent commitment by First Minister John Swinney that the Scottish Government will bring Scotland’s bus network back into public control, through franchising and regulation, by the end of the current parliamentary term. Council notes that at the most recent Glasgow City Council elections in 2022, 83 out of 85 councillors elected stood on manifesto commitments supporting the exploration of bus franchising for Glasgow. Council recalls its subsequent approval of the 2022 Bus Governance Route Map, which formally adopted this position as Council policy. Council believes that franchising presents significant opportunities to improve bus services in the city - for example through tackling network gaps to connect more parts of Glasgow, addressing frequency issues, and ensuring greater affordability. Council further believes that this can build on existing progress to date, including the extension of concessionary travel to more people across Scotland and the recent roll-out of the £2 fare cap across Greater Glasgow.

Council welcomes the ongoing work being undertaken by SPT as part of its Regional Bus Strategy to advance a Franchising Assessment and framework for Glasgow and the wider Region. Council calls on the Scottish Government to support this process as a priority and to set out an accelerated pathway with financial support to enable franchising in Greater Glasgow to be taken forward as an early deliverable of its national rollout.

Council further believes that the successful implementation of bus franchising will require long-term financial certainty, clear governance arrangements and a published timetable for delivery to ensure that passengers experience tangible improvements in reliability, accessibility and affordability. Council believes that Glasgow should seek to learn from other City Regions across the UK such as Greater Manchester, which have already been through a similar process.

Council also calls on the Scottish Government to clarify that it supports a regional approach to franchising and that while its wider Public Service Reform activity may provide an opportunity to further integrate transport powers at a regional level, this must not disrupt or delay Glasgow's regional approach to franchising. Council also calls on the Scottish Government to address inconsistencies within the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, particularly the panel process, through the Better Buses Bill or other means, to speed up the franchising development process.

Council recalls its commitment in its strategic plan in 2022 to support the delivery of integrated, tap on/off ticketing across different transport modes and providers, and regrets that limited progress has been made towards achieving this aim. Council agrees that integrated ticketing must be advanced urgently, alongside the franchising framework assessment, to enable passengers to easily and more cheaply choose multi-mode travel in Glasgow, as already happens in many other major cities.

Council further welcomes ongoing partnership working via the Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership to take forward improvements to bus services, and recognises the vital role of bus operators in securing a successful bus network for Glasgow. Council

notes that bus operators will be integral to any franchising system and to delivering on set aims and outcomes. Council recognises the additional benefit in terms of oversight, accountability and value for public money that can come from having a publicly-run bus operator as part of a future franchising system, and supports further development of this opportunity, but notes that any municipal or regional operator would require significant business case development and national financial support.

Council expresses disappointment at the recent announcement from the Transport Secretary that the Scottish Government is no longer taking forward work to clarify the legal powers available to Councils in respect of road user charging, noting this could have created a dedicated revenue stream to invest in strengthening the public bus network, including funding the development of a municipal bus company. Council calls on the Transport Secretary to reconsider this decision, which is counter to the commitment to local empowerment in the Verity House Agreement and risks holding back progress on bus transformation.

Council celebrates the success of the introduction of free bus travel up to the age of 21 and welcomes the significant increase in bus usage across the city as a result of this measure. Council also celebrates the restriction of bus fares to £2 and believes that this will also have strong social and economic benefits in our city. Council believes that these are positive steps to making the city more accessible, increasing citizen motility and limits the rip-off pricing that was seen across the city. Council further welcomes the forthcoming publication of the outputs of its Free Public Transport pilot and looks forward to considering these in full. Council agrees that following consideration at Committee this should be referred to the Scottish Government for their attention and believes that the Scottish Government should consider this evidence base and commit to further increasing the free bus travel measures as a next step following their £2 bus fare commitment and commitment to bringing public transport into public control by introducing free bus travel for those aged 22-60.

Council calls on the Scottish Government, SPT and regional partners to publish a clear implementation pathway for bus franchising in the Glasgow City Region, including anticipated timescales, governance arrangements and the financial resources required to support successful delivery.

Council therefore requests that the City Convener for Climate, Transport and City Centre Recovery write to the Scottish Government to confirm Glasgow's support for franchising and to commit the Council to work with the Scottish Government to deliver improvements for Glasgow's buses."