

16 July 2019

Report of	Assistant Director Policy and Corporate	Author	Owen Howell
Title	Bus Review: Further actions.		☎ 282518
Wards affected	Not applicable		

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Panel at its meeting in September 2017 agreed to review the bus services operating in Colchester. Further details of the scope and history of the review are set out in section 4 of this report. However, at its meeting in August 2018 the Panel determined that a series of questions should be sent to Essex County Council (ECC), the bus operators and Community 360.
- 1.4 This report was produced at the request of the Panel to review the responses provided by Essex County Council, bus companies and Community360 to these questions. The responses received from Essex County Council and Arriva to these further questions can be found at Appendices C and D respectively. The Panel is also invited to consider the next steps for the review and what further action, if any, it wishes to undertake to conclude the review.

## 2. Action Required

- 2.1 To review and note the responses received from Essex County Council, the bus operators and Community 360 to the Panel's request for information agreed by the Panel in August 2018.
- 2.2 To consider what further action needs to be taken in respect of the review of bus services in Colchester.

## 3. Reason for Scrutiny

- 3.1 The Panel received a request from a member of the Panel to review bus services in Colchester. Following the creation of a scoping document, the Panel agreed for a review to be added to the Scrutiny Panel work programme.

## 4. Background Information

- 4.1 In July 2017 Councillor Scordis submitted a scoping document to the Panel to request a review be held to examine the operations of bus companies in Colchester Borough. In September 2017 the Scrutiny Panel resolved to hold this review and objectives and a formalised scope were agreed.
- 4.2 The review followed the objectives as agreed at the September meeting.

These included:

- To understand the strategic role and benefits of bus operation and how it can best serve the community;
- To investigate and scrutinise what bus companies are doing to:
  - Improve the punctuality of services
  - Increase bus usage
  - Reduce emissions
  - Make buses more accessible
  - Communicate with passengers when services are cancelled or altered.
- To improve the dialogue between bus companies that operate in the Borough and Colchester Borough Council, Councillors and Residents.

4.3 The Scrutiny Panel meeting on 16 April 2018 was attended by representatives of bus companies, Community360 and ECC. Prior to this meeting, officers had collected information from the invited organisations and the Panel discussed this with the representatives in attendance. A summary of the discussion held can be found in the minutes extract found at Appendix A. A summary of the written answers provided by the invited organisations can be found at Appendix B.

4.4 The Panel resumed its consideration of the issue in August 2018: A follow-up letter with questions to operators and ECC was approved by Panel. The questions related to the Bus Services Act 2017, Colchester Blueprint and follow-up questions based on the objective areas for the review and responses to the Panel's initial questions.

4.5 In November 2018 a response was received from Essex County Council. There were no responses from operators.

4.6 At its meeting on 29 January 2019 the Panel resolved to schedule an update on the review for the 2019-20 municipal year. At the Panel meeting held on 11 June 2019 the Panel further resolved that this update be scheduled for its meeting on 16 July 2019, and that the supplementary questions be re-sent to those bus companies which had not yet provided responses.

## **5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications**

5.1 There are no specific implications regarding Human Rights, however there are implications regarding equality and diversity, in that the efficient and comprehensive operation of local bus services should take account of the needs of disabled service users.

## **6. Standard References**

6.1 There are no particular references to consultation or publicity considerations or financial, community safety, health and safety or risk management implications.

## **7. Strategic Plan References**

7.1 The operation of efficient and environmentally-sustainable bus services within Colchester Borough has reference to the following themes and priorities of the Strategic Plan 2018-21:

- Growth:
  - Help make sure Colchester is a welcoming place for all residents and visitors;
  - Ensure residents benefit from Colchester's economic growth with skills, jobs and improving infrastructure;
  - Work with partners to create a shared vision for a vibrant town centre.
- Opportunity:
  - Promote green technologies through initiatives such as SMART Cities;
  - Promote initiatives to help residents live healthier lives.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - Minutes extract from Scrutiny Panel meeting on 16 April 2018.

Appendix B - Summary of initial written answers to the review, as provided by the invited organisations and companies.

Appendix C - Responses to the Scrutiny Panel's follow-up questions, as provided by Essex County Council.

Appendix D - Responses to the Scrutiny Panel's follow-up questions, as provided by Arriva.

**EXTRACT FROM THE SCRUTINY PANEL MINUTES OF THE MEETING  
HELD ON 16 APRIL 2019**

**160. Bus Review**

**Councillor Fox (by reason being an employee of Community360) declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7 (5).**

**Geoff Whybrow, Transport Representative, Tiptree Parish Council**

Geoff Whybrow, Tiptree Parish Council Transport representative attended the Scrutiny Panel meeting to highlight his disappointment with public transport in Tiptree. Mr Whybrow stated that Tiptree was one of the largest growing villages in Essex and that the last bus back from Colchester Town Centre was at 7pm in the evening. This means that for those without a car they cannot access the evening economy and other facilities in Colchester Town Centre. This also causes significant issues for those attempting to return on the train from London.

Geoff Whybrow informed the Panel that an Essex County Council supported evening service between Tiptree and Colchester had recently been withdrawn. Despite user surveys conducted by Tiptree Parish Council highlighting the level of patronage it is not expected that the supported service will return. Geoff Whybrow reiterated that the Parish Council are disappointed at the withdrawal of the supported service and feel that something needs to be done to increase public transport provision in Tiptree.

**Elizabeth Trellis, Transport Representative, East Donyland**

Elizabeth Trellis attended the meeting as the Transport Representative for East Donyland Parish Council. Ms Trellis raised the issue of the shuttlebus that has provided a link to the standard bus service, following a road closure by Anglian Water in the Parish.

Ms Trellis informed the Panel that the bus provided was not access friendly and that stopping times had been incorrectly advertised. Accurate information regarding stopping times had been circulated through the village following a resident borrowing the schedule from the bus driver and photocopying the details.

Ms Trellis also highlighted difficulty with congestion at bus stops in Colchester Town Centre, which results in buses stopping in different locations to their allotted bus stop.

### **Heather Carnes**

Heather Carnes attended the meeting to have her say regarding her disappointment of the withdrawal bus route 66a. Ms Carnes highlighted that the bus service had run for forty years, providing public transport to those residents on Barnhall Avenue, Mountbatten Drive and Abbots Road.

Heather Carnes highlighted that residents with access problems may not be able to walk to the nearest bus stop now this service has been removed. Heather Carnes stressed that residents want to see the bus service returned to the original route.

### **Nick Chilvers**

Nick Chilvers highlighted that he was a frequent user of buses, and supported the return of the 66a route. Mr Chilvers questioned why the service was cut as it has inconvenienced a lot of residents in the area. For those with accessibility issues the nearest bus stop is now too far to get to. Mr Chilvers suggested that it would not require too much creative thinking between Essex County Council, Colchester Borough Council and First Bus to bring at least one service an hour to the 66a route. It was also highlighted that later in the year a new Lidl would be built on this route bringing additional passengers to the location.

Mr Chilvers questioned whether previous suggestions to improve the Town Centre, such as removing the uncontrolled pedestrian crossing on the High Street outside of the George Hotel and improving the curbs near bus stops to allow better access and prevent buses from sticking out into the road, would be carried out.

Mr Chilvers also requested that better information regarding the bus services be available at bus stops.

### **Cllr Rosalind Scott**

Councillor Scott, attended the meeting and echoed many of the comments made about accessibility of the bus services and asked what further steps were being taken to make them more accessible.

Councillor Scott also highlighted the importance of public transport in being the answer to air quality issues and not the cause. Councillor Scott requested information on the number of buses that are now low emission and whether there were plans for electric buses or smaller and more frequent services that avoid major roads. She also suggested that air quality could become a condition of licensing buses.

Councillor Scott raised two further points. The first was related to the concern around traffic if garden communities are built and the requirement to make transport

sustainable. The second point was regarding home to school transport in Wivenhoe which is still not meeting the needs of children or families in the community.

### **Bus Review – Information Gathering**

Councillor Davies thanked those who attended to have their say. Councillor Davies, then welcomed the bus company representatives for attending the Panel. Councillor Davies highlighted that this is an information gathering session, with a further discussion occurring in the next municipal year. Attendees were then invited to provide a brief introduction to the Panel.

### **Anthony Comber, Business Development Lead, Arriva Buses**

Anthony Comber stated that his role within Arriva was to work with business and Councils to develop enhanced solutions for bus services and develop how Arriva can move forward as a bus company. Anthony Comber gave apologies to the Panel from Arriva's Managing Director, Glen Shuttleworth who was unable to attend the Scrutiny Panel meeting.

Antony Comber highlighted that Arriva is a Europe wide company that includes many different forms of transport, including ferries, trains and electric cars. Mr Comber mentioned a new Arriva click service that operates smaller vehicles in a zonal area. These services can be matched to different communities and deliver a better service to customers within that area.

Going forward, Antony Comber confirmed that Arriva have introduced their first electric bus on the FastTrack route. Lots of different strands and technologies are now becoming available to make it easier to link public transport together and let people leave the car at home.

### **Tracy Rudling, Chief Executive, Community360**

Tracy Rudling informed the Scrutiny Panel that Community360 is a charity and one of the projects within the charity is to run community transport in Colchester. The service is for those who are unable to access public transport for a number of reasons, such as rurality or disabled access. Community360 have a fleet of 5 minibuses and 35 volunteer drivers that transport people in their cars as volunteers. By the end of March Community360 completed a total of 50,000 accessible trips. Tracy Rudling highlighted that Community360 also provide opportunities for people to come together through befriending services as well as excursion trips. The charity can provide the door to door service for those with access issues that are not able to get to the nearest bus stop.

In response to queries raised by those attending to have their say about accessibility, Tracy Rudling confirmed that Community360 provide this service in the

Borough, and are able to take individuals to hospital appointments, therapy and social clubs.

Tracy Rudling informed the Panel that the Community360 website provides more information about the services available and that she would be happy to have any further conversations outside of the meeting. Moving forward, Tracy Rudling stated that further links with commercial operators would benefit the service and that they would hope to have these discussions in due course.

### **Steve Wickers, Managing Director, First Essex**

Steve Wickers, provided the Panel with a summary of First buses in the region. The company operates a total of 80 vehicles, with 275 members of staff and 15 routes into Colchester. First Essex carry 8.6m passengers per annum, and covers a total of 6.2m miles. Steve Wickers confirmed that all buses within the fleet are Disability Discrimination Act compliant and that 17 buses in the fleet are of Euro6 diesel standard. A further 9 have been retrofitted to Euro5 level, and following a successful joint bid with Essex County Council and Arriva a further 7 buses will be retrofitted to Euro6 standard.

With regard to punctuality of the service, it currently stands at 91%. Steve Wickers highlighted that back office systems constantly monitor the service to make it more robust and sustainable. This can mean that bus times change or that different roads or resources are placed into the schedule.

First Essex work alongside other bus operators and Essex County Council as part of the bus blueprint. These meetings allows for discussions about the major issues occurring and to look for solutions. With regard to congestion Steve Wickers confirmed that this was getting worse and that action needed to be taken to reduce the congestion in the town centre and improve capacity for buses. Mr Wickers highlighted that this can be approached in innovative ways.

### **Deborah Fox, Head of Commissioning, Connected Infrastructure (Passenger Transport), Essex County Council**

Deborah Fox confirmed that she would take the comments from those who attended to have their say back to Essex County Council. Ms Fox also welcomed the fact that a number of those attending to have their say were already local transport representatives. Local transport representatives from Parishes and other areas are invited to two meetings a year to meet with the bus operators and have their say.

Deborah Fox confirmed that Essex County Council fully supports a bus review in Colchester, and is keen to help people find solutions to help people get round Essex. Essex County Council has a strategy called Getting Around in Essex, which details a number of proposals.

Essex County Council currently allocates £60m in funding for passenger transport services. This includes school services, £30m for discretionary passenger transport, £600,000 for Colchester Park and Ride and £1m for Community Transport across Essex. Essex County Council are also required to review any services that are withdrawn commercially to ensure that no area is left without a bus service. Ms Fox highlighted that this may lead to re-routing of services. Ms Fox also acknowledges that improvements could be made in the communication of these changes.

Ms Fox stated that there is a comprehensive bus network within Colchester, more than other areas of the county. Due to the number of operators in the area, this provides healthy competition and keeps fares low. The aim of the Essex County Council passenger transport team is to keep down costly levels of congestion, which currently cost Colchester an estimated £20m a year.

The Panel were informed that Essex County Council had been one of only 20 local authorities to secure funding from central government for bus retrofitting. Ms Fox confirmed that the County Council is continuing to look at Colchester for green bus initiatives and confirmed that the Park and Ride buses will be the first to be retrofitted.

Ms Fox explained to the Panel that there is an officer programme, incorporating all the bus operators in Colchester, called the Colchester Bus Blueprint. The Blueprint looks at 9 different elements including ticketing, business engagement and marketing. Ms Fox confirmed that members of the Panel would be welcome to attend a meeting if requested.

Ms Fox also informed the Panel of the formal bus quality partnership on route 88, between Colchester and Halstead, which is a legal arrangement and allows members of the public to transfer tickets.

Ms Fox confirmed that there is currently a lot of positive effort between operators and local authority officers. In response to Councillor Scott's query about garden communities, Ms Fox confirmed that Essex County Council are taking the mass transit of people very seriously.

### **Jeremy Cooper, Managing Director, Hedingham/Chambers (Go-Ahead Group)**

Jeremy Cooper informed the Panel that Hedingham/Chambers were sold to the Go-Ahead group in 2012, and that he had been in his role for the past year, bringing experience from a previous role of growing passenger numbers.

Mr Cooper explained that Hedingham and Chambers run twenty buses into Colchester during the day. These include both school services as well as local authority supported services. The intention is to continue to develop the network, with the Sudbury link to be increased to every half hour during May. In addition, a



new service, with support from the County Council, to a village in West Mersea has been launched and has been successful.

With regard to the questions raised by those having their say, Mr Cooper stated that many of the issues relate to ensuring that there are enough paying people on the buses. This enables more buses to run and greater investment in the services. There is an opportunity going forward as 40% fewer young people have driving licenses than there were 40 years ago, which may be a way to increase bus patronage.

Improving passenger demand can be achieved by working together with the local authorities and bus companies through the bus blueprint. The blueprint also helps to highlight the effect of cheap car parking, roadworks and development on bus services and identify areas where further support is required. Mr Cooper highlighted the Essex roadwork permit scheme which ensures that bus companies are aware where routes may be disrupted in advance and can plan accordingly.

Councillor Davies, thanked the attendees for their contributions to the meeting. The Panel asked a number of themed questions relating to the objective as set out in the original scoping report.

### **Punctuality of Services**

Members of the Panel raised queries relating to the punctuality of services and whether there had been a recent shortage of drivers that had punctuality issues.

In response, Steve Wickers, First Essex confirmed that they do not have a current shortage of drivers. Whilst there was a small shortage six months ago this did not affect service provision. Steve Wickers stated that over the year First Essex reached 91% punctuality, which includes the recent snowfall disruption, and the service completed 99% of the expected route mileage.

Mr Cooper, Go-Ahead, confirmed that Hedinghams and Chambers had been short of bus drivers in the past and had previously seen an ageing workforce. Hedingham and Chambers now use a bus drivers training school based in Clacton, which has resulted in the company employing a sufficient number of drivers.

Mr Comber, Arriva, confirmed that Arriva were not short of drivers and whilst there is an ageing workforce they are working hard to encourage younger people to become drivers and engineers. Arriva run two schools in the southern counties and there is a focus on apprenticeship schemes. With regard to punctuality as a whole, Colchester is one of the better depots in the Southern Counties area. Mr Comber highlighted that Arriva are currently trialling a scheme in Southend to manage services through bus tracking, which allows controllers to reassign buses as and when necessary for the benefit of the route and passengers. Mr Comber confirmed that the scheme

looks to manage in front of the bus rather than behind it and is currently being launched in Colchester.

### **Increasing Bus Usage**

In terms of increasing bus usage in Colchester Panel members suggested the use of Oyster style ticketing and contactless payments, which could increase the number of casual bus users, as well as questioning what could be done to challenge old perceptions of bus service reliability and ease of use.

Julian Elliot, First Buses, highlighted that new technology has provided opportunities to challenge the perception of bus services as mobile applications can now provide users with accurate bus locations. This previously wasn't possible and led to uncertainty over whether buses would turn up. Mr Elliot also highlighted the need to make payments easier, which would remove barriers to usage. First Essex currently have a mobile ticketing application which assists with ticket purchasing, and contactless payments will be introduced in the near future, both of which will assist with speed of boarding. Mr Elliot stated that the contactless payments would still be in the form of a traditional bus fare rather than a daily capping system that is in place in London. Mr Elliot also highlighted that within the Borough there is a multi-operator Colchester Borough Card which is available to buy and use on different services. It was confirmed that through the Blueprint meetings, discussions on extending the Colchester Borough Card, and introducing additional types of product could be discussed.

Steve Wickers, First Essex, highlighted the difference between services provided in London and services provided outside of London. Mr Wickers informed the Panel that the congestion charge, in London, aids bus services in reducing congestion, which in turn increases the speed and reliability of bus services, and acts as a deterrent for car drivers. This makes bus services more attractive to use and increases patronage. Outside of London the commercial nature of the bus services means that bus operators need to work with local businesses, universities, hospitals and local authorities to ensure that the services can be profitable. Mr Wickers highlighted to the Panel that with new developments Section 106 funding can be available to ensure that bus services are set up for new residents to encourage bus usage and prevent travel habits changing. It was acknowledged that the perception of bus services is difficult to overcome, but that the service in the Colchester is good and working together with local authorities will improve this perception.

Mr Cooper, Go-ahead highlighted that a significant issue which reduces bus patronage is that buses do not have priority on the roads. Until priority is provided bus services will experience the same level of congestion and disruption as cars. The current priority scheme in place between the Town Centre and Colchester

station has allowed for the introduction of a higher frequency of service between Sudbury and Colchester.

Mr Comber, Arriva, suggested that a longer term ambition is for multimode transport, that would benefit congestion, and potentially some form of public transport subscription system. Mr Comber stated that he would be happy to talk individually with Borough Councillors about what Arriva are planning to do, and confirmed that the Bus Blueprint meetings are moving ideas forward.

A member of the Panel questioned whether there was evidence that cheaper car parking affected the number of bus users. In response Jeremy Cooper, Go-Ahead, stated that in Folkestone when car parking prices were reduced by 30%, bus user figures reduced by 5% on the first day. Bus patronage then started to grow again subsequently due to the trend of the increasing number of users. Mr Cooper also highlighted the Park and Ride service in Canterbury which uses the income from car parking charges in the city centre to fund the service, which keeps the fares low. In addition Mr Cooper highlighted the importance of influencing new residents or workers to use public transport rather than drive. Ensuring that there is a good offer for park and ride services and bus services assists greatly with this. Mr Cooper suggested that people were more put off by congestion in town centres than if car parking prices were raised.

Mr Comber, Arriva, suggested that cheaper car parking creates more congestion. If buses had priority into the town centre, which increased speed and reliability there would be an increase in the number of bus users. Mr Comber highlighted that new technology can provide innovative solutions for bus priority, for example keeping traffic lights green on bus lanes if the bus is running late. Mr Comber also informed the Panel about public transport in Limburg, Holland, where they are piloting a scheme to bring oyster cards and multi-modal transport to a community area.

Steve Wickers, First Essex, reiterated that buses are the best use of road space, which is constrained in Colchester. Providing bus priority allows for a quicker service and increased frequency. Mr Wickers highlighted that there are other towns and cities that have introduced bus only lanes which helps to avoid potential gridlock. Mr Wickers felt that the level of congestion is a reason why people visit other locations.

Councillor Lilley, Portfolio Holder for Public Safety and Licensing confirmed that the Council want people to use buses and to reduce congestion. Councillor Lilley highlighted that he receives regular e-mails regarding the cost of car parking in Colchester and that residents may travel to Chelmsford or Braintree instead, which could impact on the town centre. Councillor Lilley highlighted that parking charges are similar to those in Ipswich and Chelmsford, and questioned whether bus operators have special offers for those visiting certain facilities in the town, like a number of car parks provide to entice more bus users.

Councillor Lilley also highlighted that the Council are looking to improve the current situation between the bridge on North Station Road and the roundabout to further improve the route into Colchester Town Centre.

A member of the Panel suggested that further bus priority could be provided into Colchester. It was also suggested that bus companies needed to share the responsibility of attracting new bus users and must work together to get people out of their cars and on to buses, particularly as Colchester is experiencing significant growth.

Mr Cooper, Go-Ahead, confirmed that all parties play a part in attracting new bus users and there may have been times where fares have been incorrect. Mr Cooper confirmed that bus operators do use special offers and test economics on bus services, and Hedingham and Chambers will be introducing new fares as part of a new mobile application. Mr Cooper explained that the reason for suggesting an increase in car parking charges is because this encourages people not to park, which reduces congestion, which subsequently makes fares cheaper or provides a more frequent service. Changing this involves political consensus and partnership agreement.

Deborah Fox, Essex County Council, stated that there is more that could be done together to promote bus services. Promotion of services is included as a commitment within the bus blueprint, and whilst operators will have their own marketing strategies, there have been joint campaigns like 'Catch the Bus Week' in July. This campaign included have a presence in both the Town Centre and the University to highlight bus travel. Ms Fox also informed the Panel that following feedback from Park and Ride users additional promotional material was used to advertise the service in more traditional means, such as a billboard outside of Colchester station. Ms Fox also highlighted that certain aspects of the community are not regularly online and therefore leaflets, posters and adverts in the local press are also used to get the message across.

A member of the Panel also highlighted that fares for families can be quite expensive and may lead them to using the car rather than public transport.

Following a query regarding Garden Communities and the opportunity to encourage sustainable transport and use the most environmentally friendly buses, Ms Fox confirmed Essex County Council are looking at this. Ms Fox highlighted that a Cabinet member had expressed a thirty year vision on mass transit from garden communities and this is something that could be further explored by the bus review. Mr Cooper highlighted an example of FastTrack in Dartford which provides public transport links to a number of communities in Dartford Kent.

Deborah Fox also informed the Panel that new developments are monitored at Bus Blueprint meetings to assist in establishing new services as soon as people move into the new areas.

### **Reducing Emissions/New Buses**

Panel members requested information on the different standards of diesel engines and whether there were plans in place to refresh and modernise the existing bus operator fleets.

With regards to emissions standards, it was explained that Euro6 is currently the best standard available, reducing the level of Nitrogen Oxides.

In response to a query about improving the current fleet of buses, Mr Cooper confirmed that there are vehicles in Hedingham and Chambers fleet that are over ten years old. Mr Cooper stated that they are keen to generate more bus users which would allow for more investment. Mr Cooper highlighted that working with the local authority to reduce congestion, which makes running buses expensive, and increasing car parking charges would assist generating more users and provide a business case for investment in buses.

Julian Elliot, Commercial Manager, First Essex, confirmed that 17 new buses had been brought into the fleet, and each year a certain number of new buses are brought into service in Colchester. Mr Elliot explained that it is a gradual process due to the expense of renewing the fleet. The oldest buses in Colchester are being removed and replaced with more modern stock. Mr Elliot also highlighted that many of the buses now have Wi-fi services available for passengers.

Mr Comber, echoed the comments regarding the evolutionary process of bringing newer buses into different towns. Across the southern counties, Arriva, brought into a total of 80 new buses last year, with a further 40 buses during this year. Not all of the new stock have been earmarked as yet, so some may be coming to Colchester. Mr Comber also highlighted the difficulty in investment in new buses due to the cost of car parking in the Town Centre, which can be lower than a day ticket on the bus. Mr Comber understood the issues in the local market place and would like to see new products and services in the town, however this needed to have commercial viability.

### **Accessibility**

A member of the Panel raised the issue of accessibility of the shuttle bus service that had been installed in East Donyland as a result of the Anglian water repairs. The member requested information regarding which company was responsible for providing the service.

Chris Seaman, Essex County Council, confirmed it is the responsibility of the company that is carrying out the roadworks. In this instance Anglian Water contacted Essex County Council to establish their options, which was to either work with First to provide a service or arrange one by themselves and they opted for the latter.

With regard to access to services, Tracy Rudling urged Councillors to pass the details of Community360 to any residents that have difficulty in getting out of their homes. Tracy Rudling highlighted that Community360 would help to find a solution to assist them in accessing the services they need.

### **Communication with Passengers and Councillors**

In relation to communication about cancellations and complaints about buses a member of the Panel queried whether the bus companies and Essex County Council had direct contact lines.

In response, Essex County Council stated that there isn't a specific named individual, instead a contact centre is used due to the volume of queries received. There is also a passenger transport e-mail inbox, a bus passenger newsletter and a member enquiries system for Essex County Councillors. Essex County Council also have a live twitter feed that includes information as well as the local transport representative meetings which take place during the day and provide a direct opportunity to speak to the bus companies.

Steve Wickers, First Essex, confirmed that First have a call centre. This is placed outside of the local area, however due to the technology available providing real time information about bus services this information can be passed on to local residents. Members of the public can also use the mobile application to find out the location of buses in real-time, and there is a live twitter feed providing updates.

Jeremy Cooper confirmed that Hedingham and Chambers do have a contact number based in Colchester, which is available for a set number of hours during the day. With regard to service alterations and cancellations, the bus blueprint meetings allow for discussions on this. Mr Cooper also highlighted that Hedingham and Chambers would be launching an e-mail newsletter in the near future to inform local residents about any changes to services. Mr Cooper also highlighted that a draft timetable for Route 87, Colchester to Brighlingsea, was recently published on their website inviting public comment. As a result of comments received the timetable was revised twice.

### **Services in the Borough of Colchester**

In response to a question regarding the issues at the High Street and Bus Station. Chris Seaman, Essex County Council, highlighted that Colchester is fortunate to have a high number and frequency of bus services, however due to limited amount

of curb space, this can cause overcrowding at the bus stops. Mr Seaman also highlighted that due to new developments taking place around Colchester, it is likely that the number of bus services will increase. This will put further pressure on existing bus stops, and the Town Centre may struggle to accommodate that. Mr Seaman stated that discussions are underway with the Borough Council to establish what opportunities there are for additional picking up and setting down facilities, however it is too early to confirm whether there are any suitable locations that could be used.

Mr Cooper, Go-Ahead, highlighted that other areas in East Anglia have grouped the services in terms of destinations. Mr Cooper suggested that bus operators could discuss the distribution of buses in the Town Centre at future bus blueprint meetings.

With regard to rural services, Tracy Rudling, Community360 highlighted that the charity provides a high number of services in rural areas. Community transport provided by Community360 will also be launching in the Tiptree area in the near future, providing a public transport service for that area. Tracy Rudling stated that the charity currently has 35 volunteer drivers from across the Borough strategically placed across the rural areas, which helps to keep the amount of dead miles down.

In response to a question about how commissioning of supported services is undertaken by Essex County Council, Deborah Fox confirmed that commercial withdrawals are tracked and equality impact assessments conducted. Where it is feasible services are supported by Essex County Council funding. When commercial services are withdrawn, officers review whether the service could be re-routed, or altered to ensure it continues. There is also the possibility that community transport providers, such as Community360 or Essex County Council's CommunityLink would be able to provide certain services. Ms Fox stated that paying patronage on buses ensures that services keep running and that there are times when services cannot be supported. Deborah Fox highlighted that further information on this could be provided at the next stages of the Bus Review.

Councillor Davies highlighted that she would be keen to find out more information about the Bus Blueprint.

### **Closing Comments**

#### **Deborah Fox, Essex County Council**

Deborah Fox provided further information about fares for Park and Ride following on from queries raised during the meeting. Feedback from customers suggested that a family fare should be introduced, and this has now been rolled out with two adults and three children costing £5. In addition, further offers have been made to local businesses buying a volume ticket from Essex County Council. This has been

successful with Colchester General Hospital who have passed on a further subsidy to their staff. This then frees up spaces at the hospital for less able residents. Further work will continue with business to help to grow the Park and Ride service. Deborah Fox also highlighted that the Park and Ride service has a dedicated bus lane into the centre of Colchester.

### **First Buses**

Steve Wickers, First Buses, thanked the Scrutiny Panel for the invitation to the meeting and for the comments and feedback provided, which shows that people are passionate about buses and see the value and the role they play. Mr Wickers highlighted that buses are very reactive to demand and that there needs to be a plan between partners to future proof for the growth of Colchester.

Simon Davies provided the Panel with information regarding the business model used in London, as Panel members had raised queries relating the bus provision in London. Simon Davies stated that instead of bus operators needing to be commercially viable, they are paid a flat fee per mile for operating a service. Revenue from public transport provision is collected by Transport for London and then provided to bus operators. This allows for evening services, which would not be commercially viable outside of London, to operate. Outside of London it is necessary to incentivise people to use buses alongside a deterrent. Mr Davies highlighted the cost of parking in London and the difficult in finding car parking spaces which acts as a deterrent.

Mr Davies also wanted to highlight that First Essex have worked with, and want to continue to work with community groups and estates to develop solutions and build and grow the network.

### **Jeremy Cooper, Go-Ahead**

Jeremy Cooper thanked the Panel for the opportunity to discuss bus services in Colchester. Jeremy Cooper raised the issue of family fares which was raised in Have Your Say and highlighted that the industry does get this wrong at Off-peak time. Mr Cooper highlighted that a new discount would be on offer for the Sudbury service.

The issue of school travel was also raised during Have Your Say, and Jeremy Cooper commented that he would be happy to have a conversation about this after the meeting. Mr Cooper explained that in some cases school transport can provide the support required to ensure a rural bus route continues, due to children and young people paying the fares.

### **Anthony Comber, Arriva**



Antony Comber stated that they are keen to work in partnership with the Council and businesses as there is a common problem that can be tackled together. Mr Comber highlighted that there are certain Business Improvement District areas that increase the levy to fund alternative transport measures. Other options could include using funds from car parking to invest into other forms of transport, such as a bike scheme. Removing people from cars into other modes of transport.

Mr Comber highlighted that there is a younger generation that do not have or want a car, and therefore public transport is attractive to them. With more environmentally friendly technology being developed this is becoming a potential areas of growth for bus services. Buses are one of the biggest alternative options for public transport, Mr Comber highlighted that a double decker bus can remove 75 cars from the road, if the bus was given priority on the roads passenger satisfaction in bus services would be even higher.

Mr Comber finished by highlighting that Councils, Local business and bus operators can work together to deliver services that reflect the needs of the community.

### **Scrutiny Panel**

The Panel expressed their thanks to those who had attended the meeting and responded to queries raised. Councillor Davies explained that the next steps for the bus review would be discussed at the beginning of the next municipal year. Councillor Davies also thanked members of the public for taking their time to attend the meeting and have their say. Councillor Davies suggested that if anyone in attendance had any further comments that they should feed them in through their local councillors or direct to the Borough Council.

*RESOLVED* that;

- a) The Scrutiny Panel expressed their thanks for those who took their time to attend the meeting and respond to questions.
- b) the next steps of the Bus Review be established at the beginning of the next municipal year.

## Scrutiny Panel Bus Review

### 1. Summary of feedback and information from participating companies and organisations

#### General feedback

- Town is congested, making bus operations more challenging (Arriva, Panther, Heddingham & First Bus)
- Car parking charges in town centre are too low and prevent modal shift from car to bus (Arriva, Panther & First Bus).
- Community transport schemes benefit from using bus lanes but use of stops is sometimes questioned (when being used for a not-for-profit service run for a community/public use) (Community360 (C360)).
- Community groups operating under Section 19 Permits (transport of members but not the public) also provide support and signposting for service users) (C360).
- Essex County Council (ECC) are investing in local buses, Park and Ride and Community 360. ECC has recorded slight increases for bus use in Colchester and believe competition between operators has kept fares down (ECC).
- Fares and multi-operator season tickets are good value (First Bus).
- Colchester Blueprint meetings are positive and useful (several operators and ECC)
- 40% fewer teenagers have driving licenses, compared to the figures for 1997.

#### Work underway to improve punctuality

- Arriva: Building live surveillance centres to manage services. All buses have GPS & radios. Trialling of new working method in Southend led to punctuality almost reaching 95%.
- ECC: Reducing congestion by increasing bus use. Bus lanes introduced and A12 junction 28 improved.
- First Bus: Use of AVLS (automatic vehicle location system). Data used to refine future service changes. Feedback from public tracked to improve quality.
- Heddingham: They use satellite tracking and messaging to and from vehicles. Twitter is used to flag issues and a customer line is operated. It would help operators to have ways to work with ECC to manage the impact of road works and recommend a Punctuality Improvement Partnership is developed between ECC and operators.
- Ipswich Buses: Have increased frequency on their route but priority bus lanes on the Ipswich Road route would help.

### Current efforts to increase bus usage in Colchester

- Arriva: Looking to engage more with local business community. Lack of ECC funding however leaves a significant risk for operators, with a currently declining market.
- ECC: Held promotional campaign for Park & Ride in early 2018. Promoting use of Colchester Borough Card multi-operator season ticket.
- First Bus: Now using digital platforms, mobile and contactless payment ticketing for buying tickets. This removes barriers. Bus tracking app introduced, and larger buses on busier routes.
- Hedingham: An increase in frequency and timeliness of services can be used as a driver to increase use of buses. Plans include improved marketing/presentation of the fleet and better wi-fi in vehicles.
- Ipswich Buses: A new network is in operation with revised fares, contactless and app payment, along with a new website. Marketing is to be improved.

### Work ongoing to reduce emissions

- Arriva: Won £1m from ECC to convert Colchester fleet to the Euro 6 emissions standard.
- Community 360: Have replaced several older, less efficient buses
- ECC Sustainable Travel Planning Team works with firms to implement travel plans. £500k government funding secured to convert 30 Colchester buses to Euro 6 standard.
- First Bus: Introduction of Euro 6 standard buses and upgrading of vehicles already in service. Green road system fitted to improve driving style and cut idling.
- Hedingham: Want to upgrade fleet to Euro 5 standard, but this would be dependent on the awarding of contracts on more than just competitive pricing. Euro 6 standard is commercially sustainable for new additions to the fleet.
- Ipswich Buses: Improving fleet to Euro 5 standard
- Panther: Fleet in Colchester area is 'Low emission zone' compliant

### Moves to increase Accessibility

- Arriva: Use of 'ArrivaClick' flexible minibus service.
- Community 360: Most buses are fully accessible. Gradually replacing older models with new ones which include tail lifts. More capital funding support is needed for this.
- ECC: Over 100 smaller infrastructure issues dealt with, but topography and design of town cause difficulties which are difficult to mitigate.
- First Bus: All vehicles now DDA compliant and drivers are trained to consider access issues as part of their CPC course. Improvements to town bus stops would help give access where customers need it.

- Heddingham: Raised concern bus stops present issues e.g. buses not being able to always pull up flush with the kerb, through design of the kerb or illegal parking. Bus station area is poorly laid out (also mentioned by Panther) and improvements for stops should be discussed at Colchester Blueprint meetings.

### Ways to achieve improved dialogue with bus companies:

- CBC need to meet bus company representatives individually in private to discuss issues, as commercial sensitivities often apply (Arriva).
- Have a regular meeting for bus users, CBC representatives and bus company representatives to discuss issues and requests (Arriva, Panther and Community 360).
- Make sure that community transport scheme operators are included in meetings on public transport (Community 360)
- Continuation of ECC's 'Colchester Blueprint Programme' (engagement between ECC, CBC and bus operator representatives). Meetings for resident representatives to meet bus operators will continue (ECC and First Bus).
- Voluntary Quality Bus Partnerships can be effective, and it would be useful to engage with key stakeholders (e.g. the BID) to feed into bus operations.
- Regular email newsletters and consultation with operators (Panther).

Date 21/1/2019  
Our Ref: PT/CKS  
Your Ref:

Essex County Council  
Strategy and Transformation  
Integrated Passenger Transport Unit  
County Hall  
CHELMSFORD  
Essex CM1 1QH

Dear Cllr Davies,

**Re: CBC – Bus Scrutiny Panel Letter – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

Thank you for your letter of 27<sup>th</sup> November, in which you ask for responses on several areas of bus operation within the town, following the Colchester Borough Council Scrutiny Panel Bus Review meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

I have used your initial letter as a framework by which to respond, which I hope will make it easier for the panel to correlate responses to the specific questions raised. The headings and bullet points below are therefore from your original narrative, ECC's comments are added italicised afterwards.

**To understand the strategic role and benefits of bus operations and how buses can best serve the Community.**

- **With regard to the Bus Blueprint, what are the current goals, deadlines and long-term targets for the group?**
  - *The Colchester Bus Blueprint has a number of headline themes, which collectively cover most aspects of the bus business and operational environment. Specific theme areas comprise; Vision, ticketing, business engagement, current services, new developments, car parking provision & pricing, marketing of bus travel, town centre bus hub infrastructure and route / stop infrastructure.*
  - *The group has already worked collaboratively on a number of projects including;*
    - *participation in the 2017 Catch The Bus Week campaign,*
    - *development of a quality bus partnership on bus route 88 (Colchester to Halstead {Great Yeldham}),*
    - *introduction of a much improved range of multi-operator ticketing products based on the Colchester Borough Card,*
    - *the review and implementation of town centre bus stopping arrangements,*
    - *involvement with Colchester Business Community's 'Our Colchester' process,*

- *working with other service providers such as Colchester General Hospital and several higher educational establishments on bus related activities.*
- *The next major activity that the group is looking to work towards is the development of a more comprehensive partnership arrangement between the bus operators and both the Borough and County Councils, with the aim of improving the quality, reliability and environment for bus services across the town. Work will start on this during 2019.*
- *We also hope to introduce a series of passenger infrastructure upgrades, to complement the initial review of town centre bus stopping arrangements undertaken in 2018 – however this will be partially dependant on Colchester's proposals for town centre pedestrianisation.*
- **What discussions have taken place to link services and those provided by Community360?**
  - *There are no formal plans to link main stream bus services with those provided by Community 360.*
  - *Community Transport is a very important element of the overall transport service mix for Colchester. However, they do have different client bases. Conventional bus services deal with the mass transit of large numbers of people along fixed routes across the borough for local journeys and inter-urban corridors. In contrast the services of Community 360 offers bespoke travel to provide accessibility for residents unable to use conventional bus services. As a result they tend to offer bespoke door to door services, which are not easily combined with bus routes.*
  - *In principal it might be possible for an organisation like community 360 to take on some of the more lightly used local bus services, making use of the Section 22 permits that allow not for profit organisations to carry the general public. To have a significant effect this would require a significant change to the way community transport services are run. There are also serious licensing issues, following a change of view by the DfT in July 2017 over what constitutes a 'not for profit' operation and which is currently the subject of ongoing legal dispute at a national level. Until this situation is resolved it will be difficult to extend community transport functions beyond their current scope.*
- **What steps are being taken to encourage new bus users when new housing developments are built?**
  - *Wherever appropriate the ECC Strategic Development Engineers seek to secure the infrastructure to enable development to be served by passenger transport. For larger sites, this normally means ensuring the site spine road is adequately dimensioned both in terms of its width as well as horizontal and vertical alignment. ECC also tries to secure*

*improvements to existing bus stops as well as new stops, the latter generally being on larger sites.*

- ECC can also encourage the developer to approach the local bus service operator(s) to procure an improvement(s) to an existing service(s) or a new service.*
- The County Council's Sustainable Travel Planning Team (STPT) may also recommend the inclusion of Travel Planning conditions which require developers to provide a Residential Travel Information Pack to the occupants of each dwelling built as part of new residential sites across Essex. A Residential Travel Information Pack should be a promotional brochure which endorses and encourages the use of local bus services and all other sustainable modes. In addition to the packs, developers are also usually required to provide sample bus tickets. The STPT works closely with developers and local bus operators to secure tickets and/or vouchers for relevant services.*
- For larger developments (250 dwellings and above) the STPT recommend the inclusion of a full Residential Travel Plan in addition to Travel Information Packs. A Travel Plan will include the appointment of a Travel Plan Coordinator (TPC), who's job it is to engage with residents and offer information, support and guidance around local public transport services and other sustainable modes. Another duty of the TPC is to offer and conduct Personalised Travel Planning which will help identify routes and journey plans, including bus services.*
- As part of both the Travel Plan and Travel Information Packs residents are signposted to [www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk](http://www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk) and other online resources. We also work with the bus operators to provide hardcopy timetable information, particularly for new bus services.*
- What is your view on the consultation regarding the Bus Services Act 2017: accessible information and Bus Services Act 2017: bus open data?**

*In order to aid understanding, please find below some initial scene setting followed by ECC's current thoughts on the above;*

- What is 'open data'?*
  - The DfT's Open Data ambition is to have a system that creates clear roles/responsibilities for the provision of data by bus operators for local transport authorities and data aggregators. This means: (1) introducing standards for accurate bus data, supporting operators to choose digital processes over analogue and (2) makes it easier for passengers to make informed travel decisions.*

- *What does it enable to be done differently from now?*
  - *The DfT's initial intention in their Summer 2018 consultation was to have Operators referencing their data to a DfT portal\*, facilitating access to the below information:*
    - *Route and timetable information by end of 2019.*
    - *Basic fare and ticket information by end of 2020.*
    - *Real time information by end of 2020.*
    - *Complex fare and ticket information by end of 2022.*
- *\*As opposed to a centralised model, the DfT has proposed a distributed model for data. This means that the publication of data is at source (i.e. by the operators), helping to protect the provenance and integrity of the data. ECC's interpretation, is that the DfT portal will be an index of URLs that would point the user to the Operator's hosted file. Although this has yet to be made clear: more information is expected 'sometime' in January 2019.*
- *Does ECC think it's a good idea or not?*
  - *Broadly ECC supports the proposals for operators taking a more proactive role in making key data available to the public. However, the relatively short timescales proposed by DfT are of concern and the ability to supply accurate and up to date fares data across the whole range of service operations, which can be very complex, is also a matter of concern.*
- *How will it benefit users?*
  - *Making more and better data related to timetables, fare and reliability open to the public should help to encourage people to try using the bus and help improve their profile. In Essex both the operator and the council are usually prompt with current data submissions (timetables) and on the whole offers an accurate dataset, but elsewhere around the Country LAs have not been as diligent. It is likely therefore that 'visible' benefits will be more noticeable elsewhere.*
- *What are the main risks?*
  - *There are a number of risks associated with such activities, including, but not limited to;*
    - *Operators may not see the benefit and therefore not actively participate.*
    - *There's a concern from ECC, that data will no longer be checked/validated by an external body and instead simply be left on a portal for people to use.*
    - *Lack of clear data standards and guidance to support Operators - especially those who have no dedicated 'data staff'.*
    - *A further risk is that data will not be provided with enough lead time for other functions to be undertaken timely e.g. roadside, publicity, public engagement etc.*
    - *Real time information is another area of concern, for whilst operators will be obliged to provide Advanced Vehicle*



*Location (AVL) data to the Local Authorities, there's a cost to do this on both sides and this could actually be complex to facilitate if the DfT do not provide clear guidance (as different systems will be procured by the Operators, increasing the workload for ECC immensely).*

- *Fares. From our view, this is one of the weakest areas of the consultation - the amount of fares and the complexity of them means we need a robust data standard. A European standard (NETEX) has been mooted but only a handful of UK 'experts' are sufficiently knowledgeable in it. So in ECC's view, it is risky to be placing tight deadlines (by 2020) on Operators to get themselves mobilised for this.*
- *What is ECC doing to help/assist/promote with the operators/public?*
  - *We are currently awaiting the follow up report (Jan 2019) before formally reaching out to Operators to plan the way forward in more detail.*
- **What is the assessment criteria for supported services?**
  - *As the Local Authority, we are generally the transport provider of last resort, with regard to the provision of services that commercial operators are unwilling or unable to provide within their current business model. There are steps within the ECC policy, which outlines the circumstances under which ECC might step in to provide bus services and the levels of prioritisation that may be afforded to various types of service, within ECC's limited bus service budget.*
  - *This information is provided more fully within the ECC Local Bus Policy 2015 please click on the link below;*  
<https://www.essexhighways.org/uploads/files/local%20bus%20service%20priority%20policy%202015%20to%202020.pdf> .

## **Punctuality of Services**

- **What technology would assist the transit of buses in central Colchester?**
  - *Technology (such as 'green wave' systems for traffic lights or AVL allowing buses to be tracked and service to be actively managed) can assist the movement of buses through urban centres. However, the underlying issues for bus traffic in Colchester, in common with other mature urban landscapes, is the need to establish effective modal priority within the road network. This would facilitate faster and more reliable bus journey times, making them more attractive to potential service users. The potential for passenger growth would be likely to encourage investment in bus service frequency and quality, creating a virtuous circle. A reallocation of road space and prioritisation at key junctions is achievable from a technical perspective, however some difficult decisions with regard to highway priorities is the real key to*

*unlocking the benefits of sustainable modes including buses throughout the Borough. The issue is therefore volumetric rather than technical in nature.*

- **At the meeting, it was mentioned that grouping of services for destination in the High Street may assist with congestion and new services, are there plans to introduce this?**
  - *The first stage of bus service reallocations within the town centre quadrant as a whole was introduced on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2018. This saw ECC/CBC/Essex Highways and the bus operators work together to introduce a revised suite of bus stopping arrangements. This has led to a reduction in the number of services calling at previously over-used stops and reallocations at other stops designed to provide more evenly spaced headways between services calling at individual stops around the town.*

### **Increasing Bus Usage**

- **What is Essex County Council doing to challenge the current perception of bus travel?**
  - *If this question is referring to the age of the vehicles and likelihood of increased services, this is an element which rests largely with the parent groups of the largely national bus operators which operate in Colchester. The level of investment that they are likely to secure from their groups will be highly dependent however on the perceived return on investment that is likely to be secured. So if the subsidiary companies are able to demonstrate that there are well founded partnerships in place with the local planning and transport authorities, approval for investments in new and/or additional vehicles for example may be more easily secured. Conversely if a particular town is seen as somewhere that is unsupportive of its bus network and/or it fails to make it an operationally sound place to function, then additional funding will be difficult for them to secure and could in times of economic difficulty make the town a prime target for service retrenchment or even withdrawal.*
  - *Through the Bus Blueprint we have secured agreement on and introduced (in July 2018) a wider range of multi operator ticketing options, designed to attract new users to the bus network in Colchester and to provide greater value for money for some existing users.*
  - *ECC has worked with a range of parties to introduce various highway improvements across the Borough, which seek to make the operating environment for buses easier within the town centre and beyond. There will however need to be political support for larger measures to bring more meaningful benefits for the buses operating throughout the Borough.*

- *We have lead on a successful bid, along with CBC to secure funding for the retrofitting of a number of vehicles with enhancements to reduce the level of emissions that these vehicles emit into the environment, which is recognised as being a positive step towards addressing the AQMAs that are present within the town.*
- *Allied to the above point, the reallocation of services to stops around the town centre will also have contributed towards a reduction in the part which buses could have been seen as playing in contributing to town centre congestion – the freer flowing vehicular movements will have a consequential impact on air quality also.*
- *The Bus Blueprint Group and the bus operators themselves also work with and through the Colchester Travel Plan Club in extolling the virtues of sustainable travel and promoting ticketing offers to employees of travel plan club member organisations.*
- *ECC is piloting some activities with younger persons in order to understand the perceptions that this age group has of passenger transport and seeking to understand / address the hurdles that are presented by the individuals themselves and information gleaned from psychometric studies that have been undertaken. It is anticipated that the learning from these activities will enable us to reconsider how passenger transport promotional activities are undertaken in the future.*
- *ECC would also be very interested to understand how CBC proposes to promote the use of sustainable modes and challenge/redress negative perceptions within its areas of influence.*
- **What family fares are in place on supported services, and what else is Essex County Council doing to encourage families to use buses?**
  - *ECC has a county wide Family Sunday Saver ticket and the recent uplift to the Boroughcard range of products brought in through the Colchester Bus Blueprint also has a daily family ticket for either inner zone only or for the whole of the Boroughcard area.*
  - *ECC is working with operators, on the aspiration for introducing an Essex Saver Family Ticket – hopefully within 2019.*
  - *ECC also introduced a Park & Ride Family Ticket in 2018.*
  - *The marketing sub group of the Bus Board will also be working on a range of activities designed to encourage additional usage of the bus network, by both new and existing passengers and their families / friends.*
- **What is the current uptake in terms of businesses for the Colchester Park and Ride service, and what are the targets for the service?**

- *We currently work with 2 large companies and a few smaller ones, the uptake is quite slow but its early days. We are constantly making contact and showcasing our offers to prospective employers.*
- **What are the obstacles for introducing multi-operator travel cards?**
  - *In simplistic terms, the normal major obstacle to be overcome when seeking to introduce a new range of ticketing products is that of revenue apportionment – providing a mechanism that satisfies the operators that they are getting their reasonable share of revenue collected through the sale of these products viz a vis the amount of travel benefit enjoyed by the users of their services.*
  - *In reality Colchester residents are able to enjoy the benefits of a number of multi-operator and indeed multi-modal ticketing products.*
    - *Essex Saver tickets allow unlimited travel throughout the County on all but a few selected ‘special’ services.*
    - *Essex Sunday Saver tickets are a cheaper version of the above, affording travel on Sundays only.*
    - *There are a range of Boroughcard Tickets, with adult and child tickets available for various time periods from one day to a year – there is also a family ticket and the product range is available for both the ‘inner’ area (broadly the main built up area of Colchester) and the ‘outer’ area which additionally includes a range of outlying villages and towns, some of which are beyond the Borough boundaries. The scheme covers the main 3 operators in Colchester as well as being available on ECC contracted bus services (click on the link for further information). <https://www.firstgroup.com/essex/tickets/ticket-types/colchester-borough-card> The Boroughcard scheme is administered by First Essex Buses on behalf of all participating operators. First are currently planning a refresh of the Boroughcard marketing materials and developing a publicity campaign to promote its awareness.*
    - *There is also the plus bus ticket, which can be added to rail tickets for a variety of time periods – this is added on to the passenger’s rail ticket at the time of purchase and can be used by local residents in order to access the rail station at the start of their journey – equally it applies to visitors / commuters to the town who would use the ticket to facilitate access from the rail station to their final destination within a defined zone.*
    - *Within the Colchester Blueprint we have also secured inter-availability of tickets for passengers using the dual operator Quality Bus Partnership Route (Service 88).*

## **Reducing Emissions**

- **Could you confirm what proportion of the buses operating in the Borough of Colchester at Euro6 standard?**
  - *Approximately 35% of the vehicles operated by the main 2 operators in the town will be either Euro VI or operating to Euro VI standard (through the fitment of retrofit kits) in the near future. More precise information in this regard should be sourced from the operators themselves.*
  - *The retrofit kits referred to above are as a consequence of 2 successful funding bid applications for Central Government monies, made under the umbrella of the Colchester Bus Blueprint, bringing together a partnership working between ECC, CBC, First Essex Buses and Arriva Southern Counties.*
- **Do you have plans to assist the introduction or trial electric buses in the Borough?**
  - *At present there are no plans to introduce electric buses into Colchester. That said it is known that the parent groups of some of our operators do have such trials elsewhere and may have plans for rolling out these technologies over time. Information on specific operator plans should be sought from them directly.*

#### **Communicate with passengers when services are cancelled or altered**

- **Could you outline the latest developments in technology, which would improve information for members of the public?**
  - *The major bus operators in the town enable passengers to track the progress of their bus by means of 'apps' downloaded onto mobile phones and tablets. Some of these are operator specific, whilst others carry information for all operators.*
  - *The bus operators have asked ECC through the Bus Blueprint group to facilitate their access to the Real Time Passenger Information Screens, present at many bus stops, for reporting last minute cancellations to services.*

#### **Improving dialogue between bus companies and Colchester Borough Council, Councillors and members of the public**

- **What consultations do you conduct with members of the public regarding removal of services, or introduction of new services?**
  - *ECC always consult on changes to their contracted services, such consultations are widely publicised.*
  - *The majority of the network (circa 85%) is however operated commercially by the various bus companies. They will have a range of mechanisms for interacting with the travelling public over changes to their services – ECC has no jurisdiction over how, when and with whom*

*such activities are undertaken. Information should be obtained directly from the respective operators.*

- **Is there a named contact available for Councillors, when information on bus services in a locality is required?**
  - *The Councillors should in the first instance check on Traveline, all changes that have been applied to the Traffic Commissioner for approval, will normally appear here in advance of the changes coming into effect.*
  - *Bus operator websites are also a useful place for Councillors to find out about operator consultations and impending service changes as well as potentially receiving other information such as those relating to service disruptions, diversions (eg due to roadworks) and new products.*
  - *ECC members are also able to make use of the Member Enquiry system.*
  - *Any issues that cannot be satisfactorily resolved through one or other of the above courses of action can be directed towards the Integrated Passenger Transport Unit mailbox [Passenger.Transport@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Passenger.Transport@essex.gov.uk) – the enquiry will be directed to an appropriate officer to generate a response.*

Yours sincerely



Helen Morris  
Integrated Passenger Transport Unit  
Essex County Council

<b>Please reply to:</b>	Passenger Transport
Telephone:	0345 743 0430
Email:	<a href="mailto:passenger.transport@essex.gov.uk">passenger.transport@essex.gov.uk</a>
Internet:	<a href="http://www.essex.gov.uk">www.essex.gov.uk</a>

**Response to supplementary Scrutiny Panel Questions to bus operators.**

The following responses have been provided by Mr. Gavin Hunter, Arriva Area Manager for Hertfordshire and Essex.

**To understand the strategic role and benefits of bus operations and how buses can best serve the Community.**

- What discussions have taken place to link commercial services and those provided by Community360?

*No discussions to date. The Colchester Blue Print Transport Forum meetings have not covered this as far as I know either, nor has the bus strategy board.*

- What steps are being taken to encourage new bus users when new housing developments are built?

*Communication with a couple of developers representatives have suggested very little funding is available to kick start new or extended routes. This has been raised at the Blue Print Transport meetings and at bus strategy board meetings and it would appear that during the planning process, s106 funding [particularly for bus provision] was poor or non-existent. This has been raised with Colchester Borough and Essex CC. My understanding is most of the planned developments in the area have already gone through the planning process without adequate or any funding for bus services. Where it is possible to include new developments with little or within existing resource, this has been or is being considered.*

*Arriva produce welcome packs for new residential areas promoting bus travel with discounted travel tickets [usually, with s106 contribution.] We are extremely keen to be involved as early as possible in the planning cycle, even if it is several years in advance, so that we can support and influence planning applications for future developments with day one subsidy which really cater for the travel needs of the new home owners.*

- What is your view on the consultation regarding the Bus Services Act 2017: accessible information and Bus Services Act 2017: bus open data?

*Arriva have been at the forefront of progressing open data; and have been fully involved in the consultation process with the DfT [Department for Transport].*

### Punctuality of Services

- What technology would assist the transit of buses in central Colchester?

*Traffic light priority, bus lanes, key route pre-messaging for car drivers to use park and ride when town centre parking full, bus only routes using barriers recognising vehicles*

- At the meeting, it was mentioned that grouping of services for destination in the High Street may assist with congestion and new services, are there plans to introduce this?

*The High Street had revised stopping arrangements implemented on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2018 to ease congestion in the area partly caused by bunching at busy bus stops resulting in reduce traffic flows. I understand traffic flows in the area are better [but that's not to say they are good!]. There are no plans to revised the bus stop allocations at this point.*

### Increasing Bus Usage

- What is your company doing to challenge the current perception of bus travel?

*Working with our partners at ECC, ECC secured funding from DfT to upgrade our vehicles [and First Group] to Euro 6 standard helping to improving air quality in and around the town centre. In partnership with Stansted we have introduced new vehicles on our route 133. We have a real-time app allowing customers with a smart phones to track their bus helping to give confidence when using our buses [particularly with so much major road improvements currently going on with the resulting delays]. This year, we introduced new ticket machines on our buses allowing contactless payments. Together with on-line/m-ticketing gives customers more convenience and flexibility about their ticketing and payment options. A lot of buses have free WiFi. Internal projects such as Community Fund to allow staff to bid for funding to support local community projects, clubs or charities, reconnecting local staff with the local communities.*



- What family fares are in place in your network, and what else are you doing to encourage families to use buses?

*Multi journey Family tickets are available for Arriva only Colchester wide day ticket. Additionally, the multi operator Colchester Borough Card day tickets are available for both zones. We have run summer campaigns in the past for families. We are looking at a similar campaign for summer 2019.*

- Do you participate in Catch the Bus Week?

*Yes, we historically offer £1 day tickets to new users to encourage trial of bus, also attending events to share information where appropriate, or attend bus surgeries with local authorities.*

- What are the obstacles for introducing multi-operator travel cards?

*We already have them in Colchester [see above]. Any card which undermines the commercial viability of existing tickets comes with no guarantee of a no better no worse outcome, far less a positive situation so the introduction of any card with a reduced price would need to be financially supported*

### Reducing Emissions

- Could you confirm what percentage of the buses that you operate in the Borough of Colchester are at Euro6 standard?

*50% once retrofitting has been completed*

- Do you have plans to introduce or trial electric buses in the Borough?

*We have championed the need previously and have supported funding submissions across Essex for clean air initiatives including electric buses. However, we do not currently have any plans to introduce electric vehicles but would be happy to be part of a trial supported by CBC*

**Communicate with passengers when services are cancelled or altered**

- Could you outline the latest developments in technology, which do or would improve information for members of the public?

*Through the Colchester Blue Print Transport Forum, access to the bus stop real time information screens is being investigated to see if bus companies can update customer information when services are disrupted using fixed statements through pulldown menus to avoid misuse.*

*Social media is used to inform customers of any disruption currently, this is posted directly from our depot staff as any disruption occurs. We are currently looking into development of our app to push notifications direct to customers phones on the journeys they use, this is still in scope. Our website and app are being upgraded to improve information to customers in real time.*

### **Improving dialogue between bus companies and Colchester Borough Council, Councillors and members of the public**

- What consultation do you conduct with members of the public regarding removal of services, or introduction of new services?

*When contracted service 11 changed enough to potentially cause an issue to customers, on bus notices and questionnaire together with on-line feedback page to the proposals was arranged through ECC. Bus user group engagement and the Colchester Blue Print Transport Forum is the main method. There is some contact with Colchester Institute and Essex University. For our own commercial services, we write out to the local community via a number of channels and request feedback on what changes we should make to our services. These suggestions are either implemented or not depending on their validity, and we make sure we feedback to those who have put the ideas forward and thank them for becoming involved.*

- Is there a named contact available for Councillors, when information on bus services in a locality is required?

*John Copping*