

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

10 JANUARY 2012

Present :- Councillor Andrew Ellis (Chairman)
Councillors Nigel Chapman, Bill Frame,
Theresa Higgins, Kim Naish, Gerard Oxford,
Will Quince, Colin Sykes and Dennis Willetts

Also in Attendance :- Councillor Lyn Barton
Councillor Beverley Oxford
Councillor Henry Spyvee
Councillor Martin Hunt
Councillor Laura Sykes

28. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2011 was confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Theresa Higgins (in respect of being a Colchester Tourist Guide) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Kim Naish (in respect of being a local private hire taxi driver) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Kim Naish (in respect of being a member of ASLEF) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

Councillor Theresa Higgins (in respect of her membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)

29. A review of the current Public Transport provision in the Borough

The following people attended the meeting for the review of the provision of public transport in the Borough.

Rail Operators

Mr. Geraint Hughes, Partnership Manager, National Express East Anglia
Mr. Cameron Jones, Abellio, Greater Anglia Franchise

Bus Operators

Mr. Julian Elliot, First Group

Mr. Martin Evans, TGM (Colchester Network)
Mr. Cliff Hussey, First Group
Mr. John Kately, TGM (Colchester Network)
Mr. Robert McGregor, Heddingham Buses

Portfolio Holders and Officers

Mr. Alan Lindsay, Principal Area Transportation Co-ordinator, Essex County Council
Councillor Lyn Barton, Portfolio Holder for Renaissance
Councillor Martin Hunt, Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services
Ms. Lindsay Barker, Head of Strategic Policy and Regeneration
Ms. Louise Parkin, Environmental Control Officer
Mr. Paul Wilkinson, Transportation Policy Manager

Local Rail Operations

Rail Operator Presentation(s)

Mr. Geraint Hughes, Partnership Manager, National Express East Anglia (NEEA), gave an overview of rail transport in this area since 2008, providing details of train service improvements, station projects and partnership working.

Major investment to increase rail capacity had added rolling stock, forty seven four-carriage trains around the network between December 2010 and December 2011. It was anticipated that this additional rolling stock, strategically incorporated into the current network providing 3,000 additional peak period seats from Colchester to London Liverpool Street, would help reduce overcrowding issues. There were also additional journeys between Colchester and Colchester Town Station.

The main line between Colchester and London was two-track and where railway improvements are being made this does and will continue to cause disruption, e.g. at weekends due to major renewal programme.

As part of the National Stations Improvement Programme the area had seen major investment in the refurbishment of local stations undertaken in 2010, with major improvements made at Colchester Station £2.2m, The Hythe Station revitalised through Haven Gateway funding, showing a 14% increase in footfall since its reopening and Marks Tey Station £1.7m.

Mr. Hughes emphasised the importance of partnerships, working with the Colchester Travel Plan, and confirming the very good relationship between NEEA, Essex County Council (ECC) and Colchester Borough Council (CBC). Strategic Planning was undertaken in partnership, stimulating focus and development of local lines. Mr. Hughes thanked ECC and CBC for their continued support.

Mr. Cameron Jones, Abellio, spoke to the Panel, explaining that Abellio would be managing the Greater Anglia Franchise from 5 February 2012 for a contract period of two and a half years. The shortness of the contract agreement would put constraints on investment, though some adjustments and improvements would be implemented. The

new contract from 2014 would be for 15 years and it was Abellio's intention to plan to be the rail operator in this region for the next 17 years.

Whilst major investment was not possible short term, Mr. Cameron said the current fleet of trains / carriages would be refurbished. Improvement in customer services is vital and all staff will receive 3-day Customer Service training. It was envisaged all staff will have PDA Blackberries to speed-up and improve communication between staff and customers, with information kiosks to be installed at all stations and staff encouraged to be seen more on the station platforms. Investment in secure cycle and car parking would continue and all mainline stations will receive major cleaning leading up to the 2012 London Olympics. Mr. Jones said dutch employees from Abellio's European franchises would be on-hand at the Olympics, experienced in rail travel and bilingual, later confirming to Councillor Naish that they would be employed in non safety-critical roles.

Investment in improvement payment technology and systems would include an extension of the Oyster Card system, ability to purchase tickets through mobile phones and additional staff selling tickets on trains. Mr. Jones emphasised the importance of investing time in community rail schemes, to increase dialogue and maximise the effects of the investments.

In so much as the train service was concerned, services in peak periods would be maintained at maximum capacity, though a more efficient use of off-peak empty trains and trains in general would result in a net decrease of 8 carriages at peak times. It was later confirmed to Councillor Frame that capacity could be increased by increasing the number of carriages to twelve, for some of their peak period services.

Have Your Say – questions to the rail operators

Mr. Nick Chilvers

Mr. Chilvers said his daughter has been a rail commuter for twelve years, paying £4,500 per year for a season ticket. Mr. Chilvers asked whether anything could be done to improve the disruptions she experiences on some Mondays, when rail improvements on Sundays overrun.

In response to Councillor Naish, Mr. Chilvers said he believed the rail service provided now was about the same as previous years.

Mr. Peter Simpson

Mr. Simpson asked if the access via lifts for e.g. wheelchair and pushchair users, could be improved at the main Colchester Station to provide disabled access between all platforms.

Mrs. Paula Whitney

Mrs. Whitney asked whether the lost London to Peterborough service via Colchester could be re-instated, saving travellers the need to travel to Peterborough via London. Mrs. Whitney also said a lift closer to the north entrance of the main Colchester Station

would improve immeasurably, access for the disabled, and those with pushchairs or heavy cases.

Ms. Jean Quinn

Ms. Quinn, a keen cyclist asked if there are any plans to increase the number of secure cycle spaces at both the Colchester North and Colchester Town Stations and are the lock-up cabins removed from the Colchester Town Station to be replaced.

Responses and general discussions

Mr. Hughes said the objective for travel to London at peak times was to improve and increase capacity, with a need to introduce a timetable that eased congestion and encouraged individuals to consider changing travel patterns. Timetable information provides passengers with details on seating arrangements. It is part of the franchise agreement that the rail operator keeps overcrowding under constant review and Mr. Hughes said it was important that commuters experiencing problems should inform the rail operator accordingly.

Rail engineering and improvement work at weekends is undertaken by Network Rail and whilst both they and the operators continually monitor the effects of weekend work in terms of mid week disruptions, Network Rail are under continuous pressure to complete work and minimise the time railways are out of action. The interface between the operator and Network Rail needs to be closely managed and consistent, but the nature of the work suggests some overruns are unforeseen and often out of their control. Mr. Hughes later responded to Councillor Naish, saying that Network Rail do negotiate work improvement programmes with the rail operator, but works timetables can, due to unforeseen circumstances, overrun, even though every effort is made not to under-estimate the time to complete work.

With regards to lifts at the Colchester North Station, it was understood that an additional lift to the north side of the station would considerably improve disabled access, but this would be a serious piece of engineering work, very expensive, a probable long-term project for when the station undergoes major redevelopment. Mr. Hughes said the split of customers to the Station is a 50/50 split when entering by either the south or north entrances, and with disabled access available from the south side, customers who require a lift are encouraged to use the south entrance that now provides excellent disabled parking and access facilities. Mr. Hughes did however acknowledge Councillor Ellis's comment that more could be done to advertise 'Fair Access to Colchester' to users of the Station.

Mr. Hughes said the change in London to Peterborough Service was changed purely due to capacity and informed the Panel that an improved service to Peterborough was now available for Colchester users via the Ipswich Station interchange.

Mr. Hughes said the Colchester Travel Plan had resulted in a doubling of cycle users to Colchester Stations, resulting in an improved secure cycle parking facility being made available to the cyclists. The new facilities are under constant review and the current usage is between 70-80% of full capacity. Commuters are being asked not to lock

their bikes to nearby railings but this continues to be an issue. An area close to the Magistrates Courts is currently being considered to increase secure cycle parking for users of the Colchester Town Station.

In response to Councillor Quince, Mr. Hughes acknowledged the problems with the lack of meaningful information being communicated to customers on trains and platforms, saying in places the problem was significant, that the operator was battling on a daily basis. Network Rail information relayed to customers was more often than not less efficient than information received by customers via iphone. Mr. Jones recognised that the difficulty that would need to be addressed with the new franchise. The Government have stressed the need for the relationship between Network Rail and rail operator franchises needs to improve, and it was anticipated that network Rail would decentralise its operation, providing more opportunities to manage at a local level, providing the impetus for the franchises to forge better relationships and improve services. Mr. Hughes later confirmed to Councillor Oxford that the new franchise was looking to improve Customer relations, providing greater communication of information valuable to ward newsletters.

Mr. Jones confirmed that deep cleaning of trains will occur at the point of service. It was also confirmed that 50% of all trains into London have wi-fi available, and whilst this could be improved, it would again require a large capital investment.

Responding to Councillor T. Higgins, Mr. Jones said he noted her point about the improvements needed to the ticket machine at the Hythe Station, and would take away and consider replacement with a new Ticket Vending Machine (TVM). Mr. Jones later confirmed that future ticketing will be more innovative, smart cards and ticketless transactions providing ticketless travel. Mr. Jones noted the points about improved links needed between Colchester North and Colchester Town Stations and the suggestion that having one bus journey directly from Colchester to London on Sundays disrupted by line improvements, would be better than the current system of an arduous combined rail/bus journey that went to London via all intermediate stations.

Mr. Hughes confirmed to Councillor C. Sykes that there was no link between the advent of the London Olympic Games and the change in the Anglia Rail Franchise, and neither was the current overhead line improvements linked to the Olympic Games, a schedule of work that was planned for completion by 2014, well after the conclusion of the Games. Mr. Jones said the rail users would see a big difference in customer services with the new franchise, though a short term contract would not enable large infrastructure investment. Mr. Jones confirmed that there is competition between the rail operators, and Abellio are competitors to National Express as well as Go Ahead and Stagecoach.

Responding to Councillor Willetts, Mr. Hughes assured members that the ECC / CBC was pro-active in its roll of lobbying the Government for 4-track railway and motorway access from London to East Anglia, and CBC was working in harmony with the rail operators. Mr. Hughes said Passenger Transport Executives (PTE) can be advantageous, but they have to make strategic decisions where funding can be a hurdle. Mr. Hughes felt it was best to improve services whilst continuing in the same vain. Car parking facilities at Colchester North was good, though on-going dialogue

with the Local authorities was imperative especially with regards to issues around on-street parking close to railway stations, and future growth in the area with the knock-on effect of additional commuters using car transport to local railway stations.

Local Bus Operations

Have Your Say – questions to the bus operators

Mr. Peter Simpson

Mr. Peter Simpson, a trustee of AGE UK Colchester addressed the Panel.

Mr. Simpson explained that Age UK Colchester is a local charity that provides help and support to the older members of the community. It is concerned that Councils do not seem to have any co-ordinated plan in the development of transport services within the Borough of Colchester. Older people form a significant percentage of any public transport population and, because of this AGE UK Colchester had carried out a great deal of research during the past twelve months.

It identified that as far as it was aware, there is no town of an equivalent size to Colchester that does not have a proper bus station. For each community their bus station is a hub for meeting and greeting; for catching inter-city, airport and holiday coaches; and for connecting with rural bus services. AGE UK Colchester are now in the final stages of producing a paper that makes specific recommendations for the location and style of a Colchester Bus Station and this will be sent to all Colchester Borough Councillors and the relevant Essex County Councillors in the next two weeks.

In conclusion, Mr Simpson said Age UK Colchester would be more than happy to work with members of Colchester Borough Council, Essex County Council, the Chamber of Trade, the bus operators and other interested parties in forming an advisory or steering group with the objective of developing ideas for bus station that would reflect the needs and status of the fastest growing borough in the United Kingdom.

In response to Councillor Willetts, Mr. Simpson did not believe the proposal for a linear bus park facility in Osborne Street was satisfactory, and could not see how such a limited facility would manage, and with poor access for people with disabilities.

Mr. David Mummery

Mr. Mummery said he was a regular bus user in Colchester and believed it was important for all the local public that the new bus station was a convenient, fully functioning facility, though sadly what was proposed was totally inadequate, and would make for becoming a laughing stock. Mr. Mummery said Colchester was promised a new electronic information system, though the current system, not that old, does not work properly, casting doubts on whether an updated system would be an improvement.

In response to Councillor Naish, Mr. Mummery said ideally a new bus station would be sited as close to the main railway station as was possible.

Mr. Michael Allen

Mr. Allen said he believed the bus services were generally good, though the biggest impact on the effectiveness of the service was traffic congestion that above all other things needed addressing. Mr. Allen felt the new town centre initiatives should help the bus operators within the town centre.

As with other similar sized towns, Mr. Allen said Colchester should have up to date systems providing real-time information e.g. at Brighton. Mr. Allen believed the new bus terminal would create a greater conflict with bus / car traffic than the current location, asking the question as to whether there was any valid reason for reversing the decision to close the current temporary bus station.

Ms. Jean Quinn

Ms. Quinn said when she visited the firstsite building at the opening, looking out from the building you could see the movement of buses operating in the current temporary bus station and it appeared to work in harmony with the firstsite building, it seemed it was in the right place. A friend of Ms. Quinn, a local bus driver, felt the current bus station location was the ideal place. Ms. Quinn believed that given the current bus operations worked very well and bus users appeared happy with the current arrangements there was a good case for saying the argument to have the station remain in its current location had been won, and it was the Council's role to deliver what the residents want.

Mr. Andy Hamilton

Mr. Hamilton said the report "Operation of public transport in Colchester" justified relocating the bus station in only fourteen lines, a project that has caused huge disruption to the bus users and with no evidence given to support the relocation.

In respect of a new bus park facility, Mr. Hamilton said the report failed to show what consideration and conclusion was given to vehicle emissions in this semi-enclosed area, no provision of a mobility scooter service, no toilets though with a vague statement that the current NCP car park facilities are to be improved, unspecified improvements to the Vineyard Gate lift.

Mr. Hamilton said there remained many unanswered questions and no reasons given as to why the bus station had to be moved, believing that an efficient and attractive bus station could be built in the existing area.

At this point the Chairman drew a halt to Mr. Hamilton's speech, considering his comments to be unsubstantiated and vexatious.

Mrs. Paula Whitney

Mrs. Whitney said the heavy use of traffic in general in the town centre was causing congestion and poor air quality, and it was a fact that pollution kills more than accidents. Mrs. Whitney urged the Council to get to grips with these issues, and hoped the introduction of a 'car free High Street' would come as soon as possible, and start from

8 am, not the 10 am start as being considered.

Mrs. Whitney responded to Councillor Naish by saying only a mind set change would make the public move from car to public transport, but this needed to be encouraged by good quality reliable public transport.

Mr. Nick Chilvers

Mr. Chilvers said there was an ever increasing number of local people using the local bus service in Colchester, one of the fastest growing towns in England. Given this, Mr. Chilvers asked why the legal agreement could not be reopened and reconsidered in terms of relocating the bus station. Mr. Chilvers asked if Councillors are being obstructed by officers who will not budge on their plans, especially that one third of the open space in this locality was yet to be determined, stating where there is a will there is a way.

Mr. Chilvers asked the bus operators whether they shared the confidence of the ECC and CBC that the new facility in Osborne Street will work, without being a congestion, management and safety nightmare.

Mr. Chilvers believed there are safety and hazard issues with the new facility, trade and private vehicles in and out of Kwik Fit, Blue Badge motorists parking on yellow lines, delivery lorries heading for the Lion Walk Precinct and heavy pedestrian use. These issues surely merited an independent safety assessment, especially given the mayhem at stops outside Wilkinson's every afternoon because of heavy bus use at this time. Pay to use toilets was imperative in this location to avoid being hijacked by alcohol and drug users.

Mr. Chilvers urged the Panel to express to Cabinet that this was a half hearted effort, that will not work and the development should be halted until the development of the Vineyard Gate area.

Mr. Chilvers concluded by saying dedicated bus lanes for park and ride in the vicinity of Colchester North Station will cause gridlock for half a mile in all directions and the new High Street scheme should be halted until park and ride is introduced.

Councillor Laura Sykes

Councillor Sykes spoke about traffic congestion and bus services in Stanway, saying that with major new developments in the area, for example the largest J Sainsbury store in Europe, overall traffic levels are increasing, e.g. an increase in users in the under 50s age group, and whilst a free bus lane is helpful to bus users it will cause further congestion. Councillor Sykes felt that enabling the '65' buses to stop at Lakelands, and enter and exit the J Sainsbury car park to bring shoppers to the store would help users, relieve congestion and reduce litter and abandoned trolleys.

Councillor Henry Spyvee

Councillor Spyvee believed the perception in the region was that Colchester people used public transport to a greater level than other towns in Essex, and wondered if this

was the case, why it appeared only to receive second-hand bus replacements, whilst new bus replacements went to other similar sized towns. Was this because the overall bus service in the Borough was split between a number of bus operators, and wasn't the heavily polluted areas of the town centre in part due to, but not solely, Colchester running an overall older bus fleet than other towns. Councillor Spyvee believed the pollution problem in the Brook Street area was not helped by the large number of 'out of service' buses using this route.

Councillor Spyvee concluded by asking whether in the future time tabling information could be made available via i-phone.

Responses and general discussions

Mr. Paul Wilkinson reminded the Panel that the November meeting had set the scene for relocation of the bus station facility to Osborne Street when given an update on the St Botolphs Regeneration project. Mr. Wilkinson said officers from ECC and CBC are working closely with all bus operators on the new site, taking account of the many issues raised by members of the public, and moving forward with proposals.

Mr. Alan Lindsay said the biggest issue for the town centre was congestion, and officers from ECC and CBC are working continuously on a lot of initiatives such as 'Cycle Town' and 'Town Centre Plan' to help resolve this problem. The failings of the current real time information displayed at the town centre bus stops was been investigated with a view of ensuring the failings will be addressed with regard to any new installations. Later in the discussions Mr. Hussey said congestion does impact on the bus operators and Colchester and Hadleigh are the worst towns in the region for congestion. Other similar ancient towns and cities like Oxford and York, with similar narrow town centre roads suffer with the same problems. Councillor Naish said this gave a clear message to the Cabinet, that reducing traffic congestion in the town centre must be a top priority.

Mr. Lindsay said the new site is, and will continue to be subject to stage by stage health and safety audits, and a bus stop will remain in Queen Street close to the current Bus Station. It was also confirmed that real-time information via i-phone will be considered as part of the new real-time information system.

Councillor Lyn Barton said the main key to reducing congestion was to change people's travel patterns (PTP), and the good news was that passenger footfall and cycle travel to the Colchester train stations continues to increase. It was felt that a lot of separate but coordinated initiatives to reduce congestion would have a long-term larger impact on PTP.

Mr. Vipond, Executive Director, said in respect of the legal agreement for the current temporary bus station site, the land swaps for this regeneration area were negotiated and agreed in 2005-6 and fed into the St Botolphs Quarter Master Plan. Many of those agreements have now been implemented and are in force. The use of the land being questioned by members of the public and Councillors was agreed as educational land. Any changes like this would need the approval of the Secretary of State and suitable replacement land would be required as part of any change. That said officers believe

there is no option to have these agreements renegotiated.

Mr. Hussey (First) said he would arrange to speak to Councillor Laura Sykes in reference to her query on the bus service in Stanway, though Mr. McGregor confirmed that J Sainsbury will not allow buses entry to their car park, wishing to take up all available space for car parking.

Mr. Kately said TGM (Colchester Network) are introducing six refurbished buses (one with a new engine) to the Colchester fleet, and as part of their Essex restructuring, are to employ a cleaning supervisor to ensure improvements in bus cleanliness. Mr. Elliot said First are to introduce ten refurbished buses to the local fleet, representing 16% of the entire fleet.

Responding to Councillor Willetts in regard to rural bus travel, Mr. McGregor (Hedingham Buses) said since deregulation the rural bus services had been hit because there are not enough users to increase revenues, and all the short fares that had previously been available once you entered the town centre are taken up by the other operators. Mr. McGregor also informed the Panel that two hour frequency services to rural areas are now essential, but increasing the frequency would be counter productive for the operators, with lesser income from thinner usage. Mr. Kately said bus operations are run on a commercial basis and if the operators do not make their income margins then the service has to be reduced, and he could not see the rural services improving unless there was some innovative collaborative work undertaken by the Councils and bus operators. Mr. Kately said there would also need to be life style changes against the operator's main competitor, the motor car. Mr. Hussey said there was no easy answer to improving rural bus services, that a lot of consultative work had already been undertaken though a lot of research and investment would still be needed to improve the situation. Mr. Hussey said all bus operators already operate as lean as they can just to maintain their current services.

In regards to Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) Mr. Hussey and Mr. Kately agreed all local bus operators want to work with the Councils to improve the current situation, though the impact, especially on the smaller operators would be significant as many buses in current use would not meet the European low emission standards. Mr. McGregor said in London large subsidies are paid out to the operators to contribute towards reinvestment in new vehicles. These subsidies are not available locally and new buses cost from £120k - £200k.

Responding to Councillor C. Sykes concerning the criteria for determining where, area or town, new buses are introduced Mr. Kately said it was based on where they are most needed. Mr. Hussey said they look at what services have the greatest need and depends on the circumstances at any one time. He confirmed the bus fleets in Colchester and Ipswich are of a similar age.

Mr. Hussey noted the request from Councillor Higgins, to have a direct route (one bus) from New Town to the General Hospital, given the mobility issues for many people visiting the hospital from this area and the need currently to have to make a service change to complete their journey. Mr. Hussey agreed to explore the suggestion and give it serious consideration.

In response to Councillor Frame and whether the new bus station provision would be adequate, Mr. McGregor said the bus operators would do all they could to make it work, though they would prefer to have the current bus station. Mr. Kately said lay over buses at night would return to their bus depot, and said he would look at the 'out of service' problem in Brook Street with a view to resolving. Mr. Hussey said ideally he would like a bus station, but nevertheless, he would work with all partners to determine the best facility at the proposed site and given the current constraints.

In regards to all buses being DDA compliant, Councillor Oxford said this was not the case for the 8/8a evening and weekend service at High Woods, and why in these circumstances couldn't S106 monies be made available to invest in public transport services. Mr. Kately said he would investigate the problem of service 8/8a and respond to Councillor Oxford. Mr. Lindsay said he will look into the section 106 issue and also respond to Councillor Oxford accordingly.

In what had been considered a very informative meeting, Councillor Chapman said he hoped any future meetings would be spread across 2-3 meetings to allow visitors and Panel Members a better, less hurried opportunity to present their cases and respond fully in the discussions.

Temporary Bus Station in Queen Street

Mr. Vipond responded to Councillor Willetts who asked that Cabinet reconsider the decision to relocate the bus station away from Queen Street to Osborne Street.

Mr. Vipond repeated what the Portfolio Holder for Renaissance had said to the press and he had earlier in the discussions, that in terms of legal agreements the decision had already been taken and a large part of the land currently occupied by the temporary bus station would, as part of the land transfer agreement, be given back for educational purposes. Mr. Vipond said even if the Administration wished to reverse this agreement it was not in their gift to do so. The policy, written into the Master Plan and upheld by this and the previous administrations, was to have the bus park provision in the Osborne Street location by the end of 2012.

Councillor Willetts said whilst he understood the legalistic view, he had not heard about any suggestion as to whether any consideration had been given to determine if alternative options could provide an opportunity to determine flexibility in the agreement.

Councillor Barton said the provision of a bus park in the Osborne Street locality had been part of the Master Plan since 2005, though the current Administration had explored the possibility of flexibility in the legal agreement. That said, there was no clear evidence that all bus users wanted a bus station in the town centre, a point later reiterated by Councillors G. Oxford and C. Sykes. The Portfolio Holder reiterated that the Secretary of State had granted permission for the land transfer, allowing the construction of firstsite, with land on the site of the temporary bus station transferred to the nearby school for educational purposes. Councillor Barton felt it was time to draw a line and move forward.

Whilst taking account of what had been previously mentioned, Councillor Quince asked whether the one third of the piece of land currently occupied by the temporary bus station, and set aside for phase II of the St Botolphs Quarter regeneration project, could be used for the new bus terminal. Councillor Barton said this could not happen as the significant amount of secured funding for the redevelopment of this area was agreed on the principle that there would be no bus station in this area.

Mr. Vipond reiterated that a change of the current legal agreement was not in the Council's gift. Mr. Vipond also pointed out that when officers are trying to deliver a regeneration area and everything the project entails, this all relies in some part to selling a vision of what will / will not be provided. Within the vision for the St Botolphs Masterplan, the hotel developers were happy to invest in this vision, but with a proposal that would not leave a bus station in the area. Mr. Vipond said officers are committed to, and continue to work on the new facility, endeavouring to find ways to deliver a bus station that is comparable to those in other similar sized towns. Mr. Lindsay confirmed that ECC officers also believe there is no possibility to change the current legal agreement. Councillor T. Higgins said the children from the local school, who will use this piece of land, should be allowed to do so without bus pollution.

Councillor Barton confirmed to Councillor Ellis that the new bus station would be phased in. Phase I would entail the initial introduction of the facility as previously described, with phase II coming at the time of the Vineyard redevelopment.

Councillor Chapman said he was reassured about the relocation of the bus station, given the comments that the Hotel would not be developed if a bus station remained in that area, and the fact that the proposed bus park would be phased in, in stages, enabling the facility to be enhanced over time.

Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA)

Following discussion by Councillors in regards to air quality emissions, Ms. Louise Parkin explained to the Panel that the Council had applied for further AQMAs. Further assessment of all AQMAs will be undertaken to ascertain what percentage of the overall pollution is produced for each mode of transport, and this work will be carried out over the next twelve months.

Ms. Parkin said it was important that this work was undertaken to better understand all the problems before any major action is taken.

Conclusions

Councillor Frame suggested the Panel request the Cabinet to continue to promote and develop public transport travel in Colchester that will have the knock-on effect of reducing traffic congestion in the town centre.

RESOLVED that the Panel;

- i) Thanked all the public transport representatives, officers from Essex County Council and Colchester Borough Council and the Portfolio Holder for attending the meeting and contributing to the positive discussions.

- ii) Noted the report on the Operation of Public Transport in the Borough
- iii) Congratulated officers on their continued dialogue with the rail and bus operators as recognised by the operators during discussions.
- iv) Requested the Cabinet to continue to promote and develop public transport travel in Colchester that will have the knock-on effect of reducing traffic congestion in the town centre.
- v) Requested the Cabinet to consider if there would be any benefits to introducing a Travel Review Board for the purpose of inviting all public transport operators and user groups to periodical meetings.
- vi) Would consider a further review in 2012-13, after the introduction of the new bus station, and for the review to be split into a series of more manageable meetings.

30. Work Programme

RESOLVED that the Panel considered and noted the current Work Programme.