

Colchester Borough Council – Scrutiny Panel 27th February 2018 Bus Review - Bus Company Responses

Please provide below brief responses to questions outlined below. A copy of this response will be included in the public agenda for the meeting.

What are your views on operating bus services in the Borough of Colchester?

Colchester has a comprehensive bus network, with high levels of service provided across a broad span of the day and week on most corridors.

Fares represent good value for money, and the existence of a multi-operator ticket provides customers with the option of buying a product which enables travel on the full network provided by all operators.

A “Colchester Blueprint” partnership is developing with the main bus operators, Essex County Council and Colchester Borough Council, with quarterly meetings to discuss bus issues.

The main issues facing operators are congestion, with the consequential high costs of operation. Cheap car parking is a barrier to achieving modal shift.

An objective for this review is to investigate what bus companies are doing to improve punctuality of services, increase bus usage, reduce emissions and make buses more accessible. The following questions are aimed to understand your experiences in these areas.

Q1) Could you detail steps you are undertaking to improve punctuality of service?

Our services are monitored using an automatic vehicle location system, which enables our control staff to closely manage the service.

Data from our system is used to refine and improve our timetables to reflect actual conditions.

On time performance plans are in place, focussing on improving service delivery. We track feedback from customers to improve reliability.

Q2) What future plans do you have to increase bus usage in Colchester?

Introducing digital platforms for buying travel. Increasingly popular mobile ticketing and contactless payments later this spring help to remove barriers to usage and make travel easier for customers, and speed up boarding times.

Introduced journey planning and live bus tracking app, to provide confidence in the service.

Increasing capacity with larger buses deployed on the busiest journeys.

Q3) What steps are you taking to reduce emissions?

First introduced 17 Euro 6 specification buses to Colchester two years ago, the first of their kind in Essex.

Ten buses were upgraded in a joint bid with CBC in 2015, to Euro 5 standards. A successful bid with ECC will see seven double deckers upgraded to Euro 6 standards this year.

Green road system fitted to our buses encourages a sympathetic driving style and reduced idling.



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Q4) Thinking of bus accessibility, is there any way this can be improved?

All buses are now DDA compliant.

Improved stopping infrastructure around the town centre. Access to where customers need to travel to is vital.

Drivers are trained through their CPC courses. A dedicated Journey Makers course trains our drivers to see issues through the eyes of our customers to understand their needs.

Another objective for this review is to improve the dialogue between bus companies that operate in the Borough and Colchester Borough Council, Councillors and residents. How do you feel that this could best be achieved?

Build on the Blueprint meetings already in place. Happy to consider more local forums to review certain routes periodically if that is deemed beneficial. We are looking to improve the methods customers have for giving us feedback. A recent addition was a Rant and Rave app to give us feedback quickly and simply.

Is there anything further that you would wish to share with the Scrutiny Panel.