	Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sustainability			ltem
Colchester	26 November 2021			
Report of	Assistant Director of Place and Client Services	Author	Jane Thompson	Ì
Title	ECC Consultation – Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan			
Wards affected	All			

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Essex County Council (ECC) as the Transport Authority is inviting responses to their Essex Bus Service Improvement Plan (ESBIP) which looks to work with others to increase bus use in Essex. This consultation asks for views on the EBSIP and the proposed Enhanced Partnership (EP).
- 1.2 The EBSIP and the proposed EP set out obligations on ECC as well as the bus operators to work together on a range of initiatives which are included in the <u>consultation</u> <u>document</u>. These initiatives include a review of service provision in the districts, quality of buses, marketing, timetabling among others.

2.0 Recommended Decisions

- 2.1 To agree the response (see Appendix 1) to the ECC consultation, which will help increase bus passenger numbers (thereby helping the Council meet its sustainability objectives) and improve communities' connectivity; and promote the town centre as a major destination to work and visit.
- 2.2 To request that CBC is closely involved with ECC and others in the resulting development of the Colchester EP to ensure it aligns with the Council's plans and policies.

3.0 Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 The Council has a number of strategies and policies that reflect the importance it places on encouraging sustainability, including in the choices for sustainable modes of transport. Documents such as the Strategic Plan, and the Local Plan, show the Councils aspirations to encourage greater modal shift from private cars to sustainable transport. To give residents, visitors and employees genuine opportunity, the public transport network needs to provide realistic alternative choices. Buses can play an important part in this choice.
- 3.2 ECC are the responsible authority for this work; however this Council would wish to support ECC in their role as the lead Transport Authority, by working closely with them and with operators to improve bus use in the borough.

4.0 Alternative Options

4.1 To not respond to the consultation. This would mean losing the opportunity to influence ECC on helping increase bus patronage in the borough, thereby not improving air quality for residents or tackling traffic congestion.

5.0 Background Information

5.1 In March 2021, the Department for Transport published the National Bus Strategy, Bus Back Better. The National Bus Strategy says Local Transport Authorities (LTAs) should produce a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) which sets out how LTAs, closely with their local bus operators and local communities will set out a delivering the step-change in bus services that is required by the National Strategy. The number of people personal vehicle travel for more people.

- 5.2 In June 2021, ECC agreed that the BSIP would be delivered through the Enhanced Partnerships legal partnership between ECC and local bus operators that sets out how they will work together to deliver BSIP outcomes in the defined geographical area.
- 5.3 This is the first phase of a longer project aiming to increase the number of people travelling by bus in Essex. This will ultimately reduce carbon emissions, improve local air quality, and enable more residents to access public transport.
- 5.4 Full details of the EBSIP objectives and approach, the obligations on ECC to deliver the EP, and the obligations on the local bus operators help deliver the objectives can be viewed in Appendix 1, and the Objectives and actions can be found at Appendix 2.
- 5.5 In February 2021, the Council's Scrutiny Panel considered the issue of increasing bus patronage. Their recommendations were presented to Cabinet and are set out as an Appendix 3, including officers' response to their recommendations. These recommendations have been included in the draft response.
- 5.6 In January 2021, ECC consulted on the Colchester Future Transport Strategy (CFTS). The CFTS and the Council's response supported better bus services in the borough and better bus access into the town centre. Details can be found in Appendix 4.
- 5.7 ECC have committed to reviewing bus access and provision in the 12 districts. This work is about to commence and officers will work with ECC colleagues to ensure the recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel, as well as related initiatives, are included in the review.

5.8 Conclusions on the BSIP Consultation

- 5.9 The Council is pleased that ECC are developing a vision for delivering the step-change in bus services necessary to increase bus patronage and look forward to working with ECC and the bus operators to help design the Enhanced Partnership plan and the wholescale review of bus services and promotion for the borough of Colchester.
- 5.10 The Council's support for the EBSIP objectives would also suggest to ECC that they include a commitment to:
 - require developers where appropriate to forward fund new or support existing, bus services and/or infrastructure, maximising s106 contributions to expand the network and encourage bus use as a realistic alternative to personal vehicles.

- explore other funding mechanisms to ensure infrastructure is provided to encourage bus use (e.g., infrastructure and services such as: adequate bus services, quality stops with shelters, seating, real time information, and cycle parking where appropriate).
- commit to involving the district and borough councils at an early stage in the review of existing policy and long-term planning aspirations and parking management strategies to ensure bus access is prioritised to enable quality, sustainable access, and help increase the numbers of people connected to the town centre by bus.
- maintain information on bus services so they can be tracked in real time on app, and have push notifications to inform passengers of any issues with their service, (i.e. delays, diversions, temporary changes to bus stop location, service cancellations) to give users confidence in their service.
- establish a bus cleanliness standard, inside and out, to make bus a travel choice and not just a necessity for those with no alternative.

6.0 Policy Alignment

- 6.1 The EBSIP aligns with local policies, listed as follows:
 - Colchester's emerging Local Plan
 - The Council's Strategic Plan 2020-2023
 - The Council's Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy- for consultation
 - Colchester Positive Parking Strategy
 - Air Quality Action Plan Healthier Air 2016 21
 - Climate Emergency Declaration (2019) and Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020, 2021).

7.0 Standard References

The standard references to equality and diversity, human rights, consultation or publicity considerations, financial, community safety, health and safety or risk management implications are primarily for ECC to consider as the lead authority. Colchester Borough Council is a consultee to this document only. However, generally, bus service improvements would help assist in tackling some elements of inequality including access to opportunities for those who cannot afford car ownership (as an example). Sustainable travel is part of a measure to promote equal access to employment and that improved health outcomes as part of the human rights agreements and sustainable development goals.

8.0 Strategic Plan References

- 8.1 The EBSIP assists with implementing the Council's <u>five strategic imperatives</u> of:
 - 1. Tackling the climate challenge and leading sustainability (including air quality improvements)
 - 2. Creating safe, healthy and active communities (Health & Wellbeing)
 - 3. Delivering homes for people who need them (Quality of life)
 - 4. Growing a fair economy so everyone benefits (Economic growth)
 - 5. Celebrating our heritage and culture (Health & Wellbeing).

9.0 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

9.1 This EBSIP will help reduce carbon emissions from travel by encouraging bus patronage and helping to tackle congestion and air pollution. For example, the average passenger vehicle emits about 404 grams of CO₂ per mile. The aim of reducing carbon

emissions and nitrogen oxide align with the Council's Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy.

10.0 Background Papers

Enhanced Partnership Consultation EP Plan and Scheme.pdf (sharepoint.com) -

- Annex A
- Annex B
- Annex C
- Essex Climate Commission

Climate Emergency Action Plan - <u>CBC-Sustainability-Climate-Emergency-Action-Plan-2021-23-Climate</u> Emergency Action Plan 2021-23.pdf (windows.net)

Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy - <u>Climate Challenge and Sustainability Strategy Themes</u> (windows.net)

Appendix 1.

EBSIP Consultation Questions and Council's draft response -

1. Do you agree with the proposed review and consultation process for the Essex Bus Strategy Forum?

Yes. We are pleased that the EP will be reviewed annually alongside the BSIP, and that Colchester Borough Council will also be invited to join the Essex Bus Strategy Forum. We also ask that adequate time is allowed for future consultations and workstreams to ensure that district's views can be included in the process.

1. Do you agree with the proposed review and consultation process for the Essex Bus Strategy Board?

Yes. We are happy that district council's views can be represented by three members from the 12 districts authorities, and would like to offer Colchester Borough Council to be a member of the Board.

2. Do you agree with the first Enhanced Partnership scheme's approach to meeting the BSIP objective 1?

Yes. We agree that rebuilding the Essex bus network to recover from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic by improve customer information and make bus travel more accessible and attractive, developing a clear Essex identity for bus travel and developing a single portal for information and advice is the correct approach.

3. Do you agree with the first Enhanced Partnership scheme's approach to meeting the BSIP objective 2?

Yes. We feel that developing an attractive, sustainable, affordable, bus network offering a realistic alternative to car use for as many people as possible can be obtained by investing in schemes that deliver bus network and service improvements. Seeking funding for transformational projects, delivering a step change in service delivery and a zero-carbon fleet, providing better access to jobs, training and education is also important.

Also providing high quality rapid transit service, rejuvenating market town services; and to offer digital demand responsive services to those who currently have no access to services is important, as is making improvements to ticketing.

4. Do you agree with the first Enhanced Partnership scheme's approach to meeting the BSIP objective 3?

Yes. Reversing the long-term decline in passengers both in absolute terms and as a modal share of all journeys should be tackled by a wholescale review of the 12 district areas, of the commercial and supported network to identify opportunities for improvement. We are pleased that included in those reviews the network (e.g. routes and service frequencies); the supporting infrastructure (e.g. bus priority); ticketing and vehicle standards will be considered.

5. Do you agree with the first Enhanced Partnership scheme's approach to meeting the BSIP objective 4?

Yes. Improving public health and helping address climate change by reducing carbon emissions and pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, ozone and sulphur dioxide produced by people travelling to and around Essex should be tackled by identifying opportunities for improved vehicle technology and modal shift.

6. Do you agree with the Essex County Council's obligation number 1?

We are pleased that the EP scheme will commence in March 2022 Colchester has been allocated a very comprehensive list of improvement <u>schemes.</u> We look forward to working with ECC and

the operators to prioritise schemes and ensure the investment is made in the schemes which serve to increase passenger numbers.

7. Do you agree with the Essex County Council's obligation number 2?

We are disappointed that Colchester is not included in the top three towns for investment but that residents may benefit from the <u>Reach and Thrive schemes</u>. We look forward to hearing more about these proposals and are pleased that ECC are to seek investment from DfT for these schemes.

8. Do you agree with the Essex County Council's obligation number 3?

We are pleased that Improvements to customer information and the accessibility and attractiveness of bus travel will be delivered by developing a single Essex brand for the bus network and to use it on ECC digital and physical assets, and that ECC will develop a single branded portal which includes links to bus information, journey planning tools, maps, bus stop information, and to develop and launch a joint marketing campaign with operators by October 2022

9. Do you agree with the Essex County Council's obligation number 4?

The obligation to progress improvements to the supported local bus network refers to Uttlesford only. We are disappointed that this does not include Colchester.

10. Do you agree with the Essex County Council's obligation number 5?

We welcome a wholescale review of commercial and supported networks including ticketing, fares and vehicle standards is to be carried out, and the measures to be considered is very comprehensive. We would like to highlight the need for fast access into the town centres be given a high priority to give a good reliability of service.

11. Do you agree with the obligation 1 for the bus operators?

Yes we agree that the actions listed in the consultation which include marketing, livery and developing a Bus Passenger Charter by the bus operators will help improve customer information and make bus travel more accessible and attractive

12. Do you agree with the obligation 2 for the bus operators?

We agreed with the obligation on the bus operators to working jointly with ECC on the network, ticketing and vehicle standards review.

13. Do you agree with the obligation 3 for the bus operators?

We agree that improvements to ticketing options and information could include making all Essex Saver and All Essex Sunday Saver readily available on all ticketing platforms and to publicise the ticket and standardise the child fare at 16 years as of 31 August in a year (to allow older year 11s to qualify).

14. Do you agree with obligation 4 for operators?

We agree where highway network changes are made that result in resource savings as a result of faster journey times operators will reinvest a proportion of the benefits in more frequent services, or new buses, or other improvements of mutually agreed value in conjunction with local network reviews.

15. Do you agree with obligation 5 for the operators?

Introducing cleaner vehicles is important to the Council as we have AQMAs declared in the borough. The bus operators in procuring new buses to be built to a minimum Euro VI emission standard, and where brand new vehicles are introduced within the County, their allocation will be cognisant of local air quality concerns as one of the factors considered within the operator's business case.

16. Do you agree with the proposed governance process?

We feel that the proposed governance process for the EP scheme should include representatives from the district authorities. This will help link in the work of the planning authorities with the transport authorities, helping longer term plans for services in the district areas.

18. In the text box below please write any comments you have on the content of this EP plan and scheme.

The Council is pleased that ECC are developing a vision for delivering the step-change in bus services necessary to increase bus patronage and is looking forward to working with ECC and the bus operators in helping design the Enhanced Partnership plan and the wholescale review of bus travel in Colchester.

The EP should help increase bus passenger numbers, thereby helping the Council meet its sustainability objectives and improve communities' connectivity; and promote the town centre as a major destination to work and visit.

The resulting Colchester EP must ensure it aligns with the Council's plans and policies contained in the emerging Local Plan and the Town Centre masterplanning work.

In addition to supporting the EBSIP objectives and approach to delivering on the objectives, it is also suggested that ECC include a commitment to: -

- Working with operators to ensure carbon reduction targets are met in line with ECC climate commitment of net zero by 2050
- access the funding necessary to implement the plan. However, in addition as part of development proposals ECC may require developers to forward fund new or support existing services (clearly this needs to be balanced with other s106 priorities) This will enable expansion of the network, better access to services and providing a realistic alternative to car use.
- review existing policy and long-term planning aspirations and parking management with the districts/boroughs/towns to ensure bus access is prioritised to enable quality, sustainable access, and help increase the numbers of people delivered to the town centre by bus with corresponding reduction in car use.
- explore other funding mechanisms to ensure infrastructure is provided to encourage bus use. For example, infrastructure and services such as: quality stops with shelters, seating, real time information, and cycle parking (where appropriate).
- maintain information on bus services so they can be tracked in real time on apps, and include push notifications to inform passengers of any issues with their service, (i.e. delays, diversions, temporary changes to bus stop location, service cancellations) to give users confidence in their service.
- develop a bus cleanliness standard, inside and out, to make bus a travel choice and not just a necessity for those with no alternative.
- the EP for Colchester promotes measures contained in the Colchester Future Transport Strategy, improving bus access into and through the town centre to help promote it as a destination and reduce delays due to congestion.
- provision of modern transport interchange facilities will be required in the town centre and possibly other locations designed to allow onward journeys to be made (and need to be included in the EBSIP)
- promotions and marketing campaigns by ECC be considered to encourage shoppers and visitors to travel to the town centre by bus.
- the EBSIP supports those in the towns and villages in the Borough to help access jobs and services.

Extract from the ESBIP (pages 9, 12-15)

ECC's EBSIP objectives and EP approach

BSIP Objectives	EP Approach
 Rebuilding the Essex bus network to recover from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic 	 To improve customer information and make bus travel more accessible and attractive To develop a clear Essex identity for bus travel To develop a single portal for information and advice
2. Developing an attractive, sustainable, affordable bus network offering a realistic alternative to car use for as many people as possible.	 To invest in schemes that deliver bus network and service improvements To seek funding for transformational projects, delivering a step change in service delivery and a zero carbon fleet; to provide better access to jobs, training and education; to provide a high quality rapid transit service; to rejuvenate market town services; and to offer digital demand responsive services to those who currently have no access to services To make improvements to ticketing
 Reversing the long-term decline in passengers both in absolute terms and as a modal share of all journeys. 	 To undertake twelve wholescale reviews of the commercial and supported network on a district geography basis and identify opportunities for improvement To include in those reviews the network (e.g. routes and service frequencies); the supporting infrastructure (e.g. bus priority); ticketing and vehicle standards
4. Improving public health and helping address climate change by reducing carbon emissions and pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, ozone and sulphur dioxide produced by people travelling to and around Essex.	To identify opportunities for improved vehicle technology and modal shift

Obligations on ECC to deliver the EP :

Measure	Action	Delivery Dat e
A set of proposals to start to deliver Essex's Bus Service Improvement Plan	 ECC in partnership with operators, to develop the five transformation proposals set out in annex B to this scheme. ECC to seek investment from DfT. Delivery is dependent on funding from DfT. 	Ongoing
Improvements to customer information and the accessibility and attractiveness of bus travel	 To develop a single Essex brand for the bus network and to use it on ECC digital and physical assets To develop a single branded portal which includes links to bus information, journey planning tools, maps, bus stop information 	July 2022 October 2022
	 To develop and launch a joint marketing campaign with operators by October 2022 	October 2022
To progress improvements to the supported local bus network in Essex	 Initial proposals relating to Uttlesford are set out in annex C. These proposals will need to be subject to consultation. 	July 2023
A wholescale review of the commercial and supported networks, including ticketing and fares and vehicle standards.	 The diversity of the Essex networks means that not all of the following will be applicable, however the reviews will consider: Simple flat or zonal fares within towns and cities Bus priority measures Control of roadworks Bus lanes on roads with space where there are frequent bus services and congestion Traffic signal priority 	December 20 22

•	Bus gates
	Signage
	Sustainable travel corridors
•	Bus stations
	Park and Ride
•	Turn up and go services on urban routes, running at
	frequencies at which no timetable is required, plus
	evening/Sunday provision
•	Solutions for rural areas
•	Hub models
•	Linkage to railway stations, schools, health, social
	care and employment, isolated housing, out of town
	industrial estates, factories, estates
•	Hub and spoke and feeder service models
•	Route simplification
•	Demand responsive models
•	Options for improving punctuality and reliability
•	Setting daytime, evening and Sunday service levels
•	Consistency of routes into evenings and weekends
•	Vehicle standards
•	Fully meeting latest accessibility standards
	Provision of visible and audible information
	Wifi and charging on key routes
	Parking provision

Obligations on Local Bus Operators:

Measure	Action	Delivery Date
To improve customer information and make bus travel more accessible and	 To engage with the development of the single Essex brand To use the brand on digital and physical assets (e.g. buses) in a light touch way e.g. vinyls not wholescale re-livery and at a suitable and agreed scale 	July 2022 April 2023
attractive	• To provide suitable material and links as agreed to populate the Essex information portal	October 2022
	 To develop and launch a joint marketing campaign with ECC To develop and implement a Bus Passenger Charter 	October 2022 July 2022
	• To agree a set of common network/timetable/registration change dates per year. Where cross boundary services also form the majority of services in a neighbouring local transport authority the aim would be to align these common dates. Where a neighbouring local transport authority has differing common dates exceptions would be made for cross boundary services if necessary although	July 2022
	 alignment would be preferred. When making registration changes to use a common name for bus stops ensuring the ECC database reflects that name and any 	Ongoing
	 naming conflict between the two is resolved To remove duplicate numbering on any services that run in the same district 	October 2022
To work jointly with ECC on the network, ticketing and vehicle standards review	 To work jointly on the network reviews as set out in the authority obligations summary in section 3 	December 2022
To make improvements to ticketing options and information	 To make All Essex Saver and All Essex Sunday Saver readily available on all ticketing platforms and to publicise the ticket (with a review of operation and apportionment by July 2023) To standardise the child fare at16 years as of 31August in a year (to allow older year 11s to qualify) where a separate child fare is charged 	July 2022
Reinvesting in an improved network	Where highway network changes are made that result in resource savings as a result of faster journey times, operators will reinvest a proportion of the Benefits in more frequent services, or new buses, or	Ongoing

	other improvements of mutually agreed value in conjunction with local network reviews	
Introducing cleaner vehicles	All new buses are built to a minimum Euro VI emission standard. Where brand new vehicles are introduced within the County, their allocation will be cognisant of local air quality concerns as one of the factors considered within the operator's business case.	0 0

Scrutiny Panel February 2021 Recommendations to Cabinet and Officers Response to the Recommendations

Recommendations to Cabinet	Officers' response to the recommendation
Cabinet encourages councillors to take up the '#UseTheBus challenge', to invest in local communities, jobs and the environment by championing bus travel.	Although this supports modal shift, it may be more appropriate for us to support a campaign led by ECC as the Transport Authority as we only have limited resource for transport campaigns. We could suggest as an appropriate campaign and support by sharing publicity through our media channels.
Cabinet uses the powers available to a Tier Two authority to enhance and highlight modal shift from car use. Powers of Planning, redevelopment of Town Centre and a boroughwide Parking Strategy being examples (but not an exhaustive list) of these powers.	We currently actively support ECC's work on modal shift on the Colchester Future Transport Strategy and highlight modal shift in many other planning policy documents, town centre regeneration and active travel plans.
Cabinet investigates incentives and offers, through the Business Improvement District [BID] and business partners, in developing a level playing field for bus passengers, when compared to parking deals, thus promoting sustainable transport options.	We could work with ECC Passenger Transport, ECC Park and Ride, the BID and Colchester Travel Plan Club to investigate potential promotions with special offers on bus transport.
Guidance be issued to all elected members as to the options available regarding use of Section 106 funds from new developments, potentially to support bus infrastructure and routes.	Members will be provided with information regarding bus infrastructure as part of regular Section 106 training (to be delivered by Planning). We could consider developing an evidence base with ECC and bus operators in order to inform responses to planning applications to secure S106 contributions.
Cabinet directs officers to investigate the possibility of working with partners to create a Borough-wide travel app, to support and encourage use of sustainable and active travel options.	We could work with ECC to investigate the possibility of a borough wide app, however early investigations suggest using one app with a number of different bus providers is extremely difficult as they utilise different IT systems, which makes data sharing and compatibility problematic. In addition, there are a number of apps which already serve this purpose and it is likely that these will be improved.

Appendix 4

Colchester Future Transport Strategy

In January 2021 ECC consulted on the <u>Colchester Future Transport Strategy</u> (CFTS). Our full report and decision is presented <u>here</u>. However, the reports recommendation and section on public transport is copied here for ease of reference -

Recommendation - To respond positively to the CFTS consultation and suggest areas where the Borough Council wishes to work with the County Council to strengthen and enhance the objectives, focus areas for schemes and delivery timescales to help take them forward to enable the vision to be realised.

• Public Transport Improvements (extract)

Considering options for expanding the public transport offer to allow faster, seamless access and connectivity to destinations. Examples are closer integration with the park and ride service, rapid transit and demand responsive transport. As well as looking at prioritising public transport to allow better, inclusive and faster access to destinations, considering smarter ticketing and integration with other transport modes, and working with commercial transport providers to encourage costs effective and family friendly pricing.

Work the Council is already carrying out to help promote bus transport and sustainable travel:

Although the Borough Council is not the Transport or Highway Authority, we work hard to bring organisations together to promote public transport. The Council influences and helps to promote bus travel in the borough by:

1. Inputting into and Essex County Council's Colchester Future Transport Strategy consultation which includes integrating transport, public transport improvements and eco parking (Park and Choose)

2. Carrying out, and working with others to promote, projects which help reduce traffic in the town centre, which help to promote bus use – for example the Colchester Active Travel project and the Positive Parking Strategy

3. Inputting into the Council's Local Plan and other Planning policies, and pushing for better bus services in planning application

4. Setting out air quality requirements and promoting clean air campaigns

5. Hosting Colchester Travel Plan Club which influences over 10,000 staff and students in their travel choices including bus discount scheme

6. Attending and inputting into ECC's Bus operators meeting

7. Work with ECC to promote and incentivise Park & Ride service.