

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?

As a Community Transport Scheme, we operate our core services under a Section 19 Permit in the main. However, when we sometimes are asked to run a service under a Section 22 permit, we are sometimes questioned by our peers on using bus stops even though we have the authority to do so.

On a positive note, we are registered to use the bus lanes which is hugely beneficial.

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?

Not too applicable as our service is door to door transport for those that have difficulty accessing public transport. Passengers are members of our organisation who book their transport in advance.

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

Maintaining our costs at an affordable level.

We ensure those that cannot access public transport know about our scheme. We have been working on having a more holistic approach by providing community transport that encourages passengers to think about their health and wellbeing by offering a multitude of services in addition to transport. We run weekly excursion trips which encourages people to get out of their houses and meet new people.

Q3) What steps are you taking to reduce emissions?

We have conducted a complete review of our fleet of minibuses and taken steps to decommission several of our older, less efficient buses. We have purchased 2 new smaller buses which are more economical.

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

Most of our minibuses are fully accessible in that we transport passengers who are in wheelchairs or need a tail lift for other reasons. We are gradually replacing some older buses that do not have tail lifts with ones that do.

As a charity we need more support in capital funding for these purposes.

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?

Some previous meetings we have attended seem more geared towards updating commercial bus operators and not including community transport schemes (in terms of agenda items).

It would be good to attend a “forum” where we can share experiences and work together on improving the transport provision in the Borough.

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

As mentioned before, we are gearing towards offering a more holistic approach to our members in that we wrap around other services, not just transport. For instance, we are working in partnership with Leisure World Colchester in providing transport for people who are living with Dementia to attend various activities, to get them out of the house, be more independent, keep fit which has huge benefits on their health and wellbeing. Our drivers are therefore not just drivers – they are trained to signpost members to other services which may include befriending as an example (social prescribing).