

SCRUTINY PANEL

16 APRIL 2018

Present: - Councillor Davies (Chairman), Councillor Arnold,
Councillor Coleman, Councillor Fox, Councillor Scordis,
Councillor Wood.

Substitutions:- Councillor Barlow for Councillor Hogg

Also present:- Councillor Scott, Councillor Smith

159. Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held 13 March were confirmed as a correct record.

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the Panel that an Essex County Council supported evening service between Tiptree and Colchester had recently been withdrawn.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.

Anthony 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, Anthony 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 resident's 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 realtime, 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 to 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 difficulty 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.

153. Work Programme 2017/18

Councillor Davies, introduced the Work Programme 2017/18. The report requests that the Panel consider and note the contents of the Work Programme for 2017/18.

Jonathan Baker, stated that an informal Scrutiny Panel date would be scheduled for the new municipal year.

Members of the Panel expressed thanks to officers in arranging the bus review. Councillor Davies highlighted that Colchester Borough Council was one of the only Boroughs in Essex to have arranged a review with multiple bus operators in attendance.

RESOLVED that the work programme 2017-18 be noted.