

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 14/7/10 – Agenda Item No. 10 (2)



<b>Cabinet – 14<sup>th</sup> June 2010</b> <b>Report on the outcomes from the Recommendations of Bus and Rail Task and Finish Group</b>  Agenda Item 7a
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<b>Portfolio Area:</b>	Cllr Harley Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Culture
<b>Report Presented by:</b>	Cllr Harley

<b>Background Papers:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Report of the Bus and Rail Services Task and Finish Group October 2009</li><li>• Cabinet Minutes 7<sup>th</sup> December 2009</li></ul>
<b>Corporate Implications:</b>	See table at end of report
<b>Options:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To approve the outcomes of the Bus and Rail Task and Finish Group as set out in this report.</li><li>2. Not to approve the outcomes of the Bus and Rail Task and Finish Group as set out in this report.</li></ol>
<b>Risks:</b>	Public and community transport facilities are vital to communities and must be maintained.

<b>Executive Summary</b> The Bus and Rail Task and Finish group was formed to look at issues relating to public transport in Braintree District. The final report was completed in October 2009 and was reported to cabinet in December 2009. Members accepted the report in principle and asked that the outcomes be reported to a later Cabinet meeting. Officers at both Braintree and Essex County Council have been investigating these recommendations and the outcomes of this are contained within the report.
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<b>Decision</b> To approve the outcomes of the Bus and Rail Task and Finish Group final report recommendations as set out in this report.
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### **1. Background**

The Task and Finish Group – Bus and Rail Services in the District commenced its work in September 2008. The Group was formed to look at the following issues:

- Timetabling, regularity of services
- Are bus services tied in with rail services?
- Safety issues on buses/railways
- Cleanliness of buses – are they clean and tidy?
- Are the right sized buses used?
- Disability issues – can buses accommodate disabled scooters? Safety and supervision on school bus transport
- Regulation and enforcement

The final report was completed in October 2009 and contained 16 recommendations to Cabinet. These were considered at the 7th December 2009 Cabinet meeting when members accepted the report in principle and asked that outcomes be reported to a later meeting of the Cabinet.

The remainder of this report sets out each of the recommendations which were included in the Bus and Rail Task and Finish Group Report and provides an update on the actions which have resulted from these recommendations. These updates come from both the Braintree District Council officers who are involved in this service area and Essex County Council officers.

## **2. Outcomes of the recommendations**

*1. Further investigations should be carried out in liaison with Essex County Council Passenger Transport concerning the opportunities afforded through the Local Transport Act 2008, to enhance community transport schemes by using a combination of paid and voluntary drivers*

**Head of Passenger Transport, ECC.** Changes in legislation in the Local Transport Act 2008 now allows community transport to register vehicles under section 22 allowing the use of paid drivers. Liaison between Essex County Council and Braintree Community Transport can confirm that if a suitable bus route was identified within the District a bus service run under a section 22 licence would be considered.

**Community Transport Manager.** A section 22 permit has been applied for with the Essex Area Traffic Commissioner, seven new bus routes are awaiting registration enabling Community Transport to operate new routes in our rural areas not served by public transport. We are also investigating further opportunities with ECC under the EssexWorks Pledge to Promote Rural Access and Community Transport.

### **Recommendation: To note and welcome the action taken**

*2. That the County Council's proposal to provide real-time bus information on rail station platforms should be noted and welcomed;*

No update required.

*3. That the agreement reached by National Express with the Department for Transport to provide additional rolling stock which will help to improve rail services in Braintree District should be noted and welcomed;*

Since the announcement that the East Anglia network franchise was to be retendered, officers have attended consultation events and in consultation with members have submitted a written response to the Department for Transport. The refranchising will not affect the introduction of new rolling stock.

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the action taken**

*4. That the Council should continue to lobby for the provision of a 'Passing Loop' on the Braintree branch line with a view to increasing the frequency of rail services to Braintree;*

Officers have met with representatives from Network Rail and agreement has been reached to carry out a viability study on the options for increasing the frequency of trains on the Braintree branch line, including the possibility of a passing loop. It is hoped that the study will be completed by late summer, and the results will inform future discussions with Network Rail. The study will be funded by Growth Area Funding.

**Head of Passenger Transport, ECC.** I will continue to work with Braintree District Council and the train operating company to lobby the Department for Transport for infrastructure to improve the level of service between Witham and Braintree.

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the action taken**

*5. That the Council should maintain a watching brief on progress in relation to the Witham Rail Station Footbridge Joint Project now that the funding has been agreed between Essex County Council and Network Rail;*

We understand that set up work on site is due to begin in December 2010 with the construction timetabled to begin in January 2011.

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the proposed timetable**

*6. That parking at rail stations should be kept under review particularly Witham Station where additional car parking is required (we note that the car parks servicing Witham rail station are privately owned);*

**Head of Operations.** Discussions are taking place with Network Rail and Essex County Council about ways of increasing car parking capacity at Witham Station. The Council is also looking at using the parking at Mayland House as temporary long stay parking for Witham until the disposal of the building.

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the action taken**

7. *That in connection with the Council's forthcoming review of Council owned car parks, the opportunity should be taken to ensure that there are designated disabled bays provided for those disabled drivers who only wish to drive as far as the nearest car park to connect with local transport. Any parking restrictions for the disabled should ensure that there is a sufficient period for the disabled person to travel on to the relevant location to obtain key services such as retail or hospital services, attend to their business and return to the car park;*

**Head of Operations.** In the review of car parking it was identified that some of our car parks did not have provision for disabled parking and this is being addressed.

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the action taken**

8. *To encourage residents to use the bus and rail network, it be suggested to:-*

*(i) Mr. Pope, the Head of Passenger Transport that he investigates the possibility with local bus operators of setting up a pilot scheme for including a 'weeks free bus travel' voucher for persons moving into the District that could be included as part of the District Council's welcome pack;*

*(ii) The rail operator National Express that it should consider the possibility of extending the parameters of the 'day ranger' rail ticket that has successfully operated for many years across the 'Anglia' region, to include Essex (The Anglia Region for the purposes of the 'day ranger' ticket includes Suffolk and parts of Cambridgeshire and Norfolk, but not currently Essex);*

**(i) Head of Passenger Transport, ECC.** The Sustainable Business and Travel Information Team have been working with Jo Petchey from BDC to provide a Public Transport Guide for Braintree which is to be distributed with council tax information to residents who have moved into to within the district.

The public transport information leaflet provided by ECC is now included with all new resident welcome packs sent out by the Council and is also on display in libraries and parishes around the District.

**(ii)** We will need to await the outcome of the franchising process before pursuing the extension of the day ranger ticket with the new operator

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the action taken**

9. *That the proposed bids to be made by Mr Pope, Head of Passenger Transport, ECC to the Department of Transport for 'Kick Start' funding for:-*

- *The extension of the 132 service (Witham to Braintree) so that it runs to Stansted Airport (If this bid is successful we would like to see this service serve the needs of both airport employees, and passengers with their luggage);*

- *The upgrading of the 133 service (Braintree to Stansted Airport service via Felsted and the villages) to become a 24 hour service;*
- *The possibility of a bid for a Sudbury/Halstead/Braintree/Stansted service; be supported and welcomed*

**Head of Passenger Transport, ECC.** A bid was submitted to extend service 132 (Witham to Braintree) so that it runs to Stansted Airport allowing residents to access the airport for employment and travel. The outcome of the Kickstart bids has not yet been announced.

The other two proposed services did not have sufficient bus operator support to allow a bid to be submitted.

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the action taken**

*10. That it be suggested to Mr. Pope, Head of Passenger Transport, ECC that investigations be carried out into the possibility of establishing some form of voluntary protocol to be adopted by bus operators for consulting bus users on proposed changes to bus services, to ensure a uniform and consistent approach;*

**Head of Passenger Transport, ECC.** ECC will draw to the attention of the Essex Confederation of Passenger Transport, who represent bus operators, the importance of consulting with bus users when planning changes in commercial services.

**Recommendation: To note the action taken**

*11. That in respect of bus shelters the Council in partnership with ECC Passenger Transport should agree a series of standard designs – for rural conservation areas, and urban locations – to bring some uniformity to their provision, including space for prominently displaying a current timetable;*

**Head of Passenger Transport, ECC.** We are currently going through a formal tender process to establish a framework arrangement under which suppliers will be appointed for the provision of timber and metal framed shelters.

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the action taken**

*12. That the Council should consider the findings of the study currently being conducted by Officers from Essex County Council Passenger Transport into the needs of residents in those Parishes in the District that fail to meet the minimum level of bus service provision, and review what actions it can take in partnership with the County Council to improve rural bus service provision;*

**Head of Passenger Transport, ECC.** A review of bus services in the Braintree District identified the areas within the District which did not meet the aspirational Minimum Service Level as set out in the Local Transport Plan.

Extensive consultation identified the needs of user groups, highlighted the high level of satisfaction about the bus service currently provided, the importance of the weekly buses as a community service, poor access to healthcare in some areas and the need to promote all services, but especially community transport. There are no planned changes to the current bus provision but working with parishes and community transport it is hoped to enhance the service with the introduction of new shopper services. There are also planned improvements in infrastructure at bus stops and increased access to information.

In April this year, seven new shopper buses, benefiting 32 communities, were launched in Braintree District. Running 1 day a week, each service links villages with their local centre allowing communities to access shops and other facilities.

<b>Name of Service</b>	<b>Villages Served</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>Day of week</b>
The Monday Bus	Terling, Fairstead, White Notley and Faulkbourne	Braintree	Monday
The Colne Valley Community Bus	Colne Engaine, White Colne, Earls Colne and Greenstead Green	Braintree	Monday
The Haverhill Tuesday Bus	Tilbury Juxta Clare, Little Yeldham, Belchamp Otten, Belchamp St Paul, Ovington and Ashen	Haverhill	Tuesday
The Upper Colne to Haverhill Bus	Little London, Cornish Hall End, Stambourne, Toppesfield, Ridgewell and Birdbrook	Haverhill	Tuesday
The Sudbury Wednesday Bus	Liston, Foxearth, Pentlow, Belchamp St Paul, Belchamp Otten, Belchamp Walter and Borley	Sudbury	Wednesday
The Stour Valley Community Bus	Pebmarsh Cross Emd, Alphamstone, Lamarsh, Great Henny, Little Henny and Middleton	Sudbury	Wednesday
The Salings Community Bus	Great Saling, Bardfield Saling and Little Bardfield	Saffron Walden	Thursday

Each service is fully accessible and has timed stops in the villages but as long as it is safe to do so, the bus will stop along the route within the village when hailed. The cost of the journey will be a £2 flat fee, (single or return) but concessionary bus pass holders will receive free transport, when they produce their concessionary pass.

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the action taken**

*13. Consideration be given to the practicalities of one of the Braintree Community Transport mini-buses being based and run from a rural location in the north of the District to give it a more rural focus;*

**Community Transport Manager.** This would be difficult for a number of reasons:

- Lack of safe overnight storage of the vehicle with easy in/out access
- We need seven day week, including evenings facility to exchange keys and paperwork (buses are driven by a large number of different drivers)
- We do not have any volunteers in the North of the District despite constant promotion. The majority of our volunteers live in Braintree so they would have to travel to collect and return the bus which would limit their willingness to drive.
- Employed drivers undertake a daily safety check on all vehicles. This would be difficult if one vehicle was not kept with the majority of the fleet and they had to travel to undertake the daily checks.

However, given that the shopper buses are in the north of the district two days per week this will give a greater rural focus to Community Transport.

Also the dial-a-ride bus is regularly in our rural areas.

**Recommendation: To note the response**

*14. That there be greater flexibility within the Council's Community Transport Scheme to ensure that it can respond to all communities needs (particularly the isolated rural communities) of the District;*

**Community Transport Manager.** See details relating to shopper buses which will help address the above. Availability of Community Transport is driver and funding dependent. No resident is penalised due to the fact that they live in the more rural areas – we do our utmost to accommodate all requests and as far as I am aware needs are met throughout the district.

**Recommendation: To note the response**

*15. That closer liaison and co-operation be undertaken with other Districts that border Braintree District, so that account may have been taken of the impact of 'outside' demand for public transport services that operate across Braintree District;*

**Head of Passenger Transport, ECC.** Through our network of representatives, I will ensure that we liaise with the Districts over common issues.

**Community Transport Manager.** We liaise with bordering Community Transport Schemes regarding individual specific transport requests. Braintree Community Transport is open to liaise and co-operate where practical with any other Scheme.

**Recommendation: To note the response**

*16. In the context of considering new ways and ideas of meeting rural transport needs, that the innovative passenger and community transport scheme in Suffolk (identified by Cllr. G. Spray in her research) be looked at further to see whether any of the initiatives could be applied in this District.*

**Community Transport Manager.** The County of Suffolk as a whole has been identified. All 13 CT Schemes across Essex operate differently (depending on their funding) accordingly to the specific needs to the areas they serve. Braintree Community Transport also operates an innovative Community Transport Scheme which over ten years has been tailored to the specific needs of residents who live in the BDC Council Area and tell us what services they want to access. Below I have listed some of the initiatives we have taken forward which specifically relate to our rural areas:

- Social Care Scheme volunteer drivers – 7 live and drive in rural locations.
- Dial-a-ride Scheme - one dedicated minibus with paid driver for wheelchair users unable to transfer, covering the whole of the BDC Council area
- Day Trips – offered April to December. Elderly and isolated residents are collected from their homes and taken to various locations for a day out.
- Free Festive Trip during December 2009 – every member was offered a free trip, home collection with mince pie and coffee (successful funding bid from Mid Essex Area Forum)
- Free Strawberry Trips – every member has been offered the chance of a free trip this summer (funding as above).
- Successful funding bid via the Village Agent Project for a paid driver for two years specifically to cover our rural areas. The driver is primarily deployed on the shopper bus
- Shopper Buses – partnership working with ECC who have funded the operational costs.
- Partnership working with the Village Agents have enabled four new (so far) groups based in our rural areas - Bardfields, Bures, Earls Colne and Fairstead to join and utilise the Minibus Scheme. Two Village Agents trained to MiDas standard to enable them to drive for these Groups.
- Offer travel tokens to those in our District who are not on a bus route (primarily in our rural areas) or are registered disabled.

We are happy to investigate any unmet need which may be brought to our attention; obviously service provision is funding and driver dependent.

**Head of Passenger Transport, ECC.** Through our network of representatives, I will ensure that we liaise with the Districts over common issues.

**Recommendation: To note and welcome the response**

**Recommendation:**

**1. To approve the outcomes of the Bus and Rail Task and Finish Group final report recommendations as set out in this report.**

<b>Corporate Implications</b>				
<b>Financial:</b>	Actions outlined above will be funded from existing budgets			
<b>Legal:</b>	N/A			
<b>Equalities &amp; Diversity:</b>	Public and community transport caters for all members of society.			
<b>Customer Impact:</b>	Effective and efficient public and community transport can help people to feel less isolated and ensure they can reach services, shops and employment opportunities.			
<b>Environment &amp; Climate Change:</b>	Better public transport links will help to reduce the number of private car journeys and contribute to measures to reduce carbon emissions.			
<b>Consultation/Community Engagement:</b>	Local Committees		Partners	✓
	Public		Staff	
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No			
<b>Public/Private Report:</b>	Public			
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	Paul Munson/Emma Boaler			
<b>Designation:</b>	Head of District Development/Policy Planner			
<b>Ext No:</b>	2560/2511			
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**Extract from Minutes of Cabinet – 14/6/10**

**REPORT ON THE OUTCOMES FROM THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BUS AND RAIL TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

11. Councillor Harley, Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Culture, presented the report on the outcomes from the recommendations from the Bus and Rail Task and Finish Group.

Members welcomed the progress on taking forward the recommendations from Task and Finish Group.

Councillor M G Gage said that the outcomes demonstrated the importance of Task and Finish Groups and encouraged Members to participate in Groups such as the current one on services to older people. He added that participation was rewarding and can make a positive contribution to the lives of residents.

In respect of the recommendations relating to Witham Station, Councillor Lager reminded Members that the car park at Whitehorse Lane was now in the control of the Council and secured for continued use as a car park. He also reported that National Express East Anglia was participating in work looking to bring another access to the Station.

The Leader suggested that Councillor Harley may wish to consider involving the Halstead Local Committee in seeking more volunteer drivers for Community Transport from the north of the District.

**DECISION:** That the outcomes of the Bus and Rail Task and Finish Group final report recommendations as set out in the report be approved.