

**UTTLESFORD TRANSPORT FORUM
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 26 JULY 2006 AT DISTRICT COUNCIL
OFFICES, HIGH STREET, GREAT DUNMOW, ESSEX**

THOSE PRESENT

District Councillors Jackie Cheetham, Catherine Dean and David Gregory, Sue Locke and Jeremy Pine (UDC), Peter Carmichael and David Rose (Uttlesford Community Travel), Catherine Gaywood (ECC), Peter Blanchard (Walden Travel / CPT Essex), David Corke (Wimbish PC), Paul Garland (LA21), Sue Mayer (UALC) and Ian Willard (Saffron Walden Cycle Campaign)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1. Apologies were received from Councillor Jan Menell, Murray Hardy and Sarah Saward (UDC), Rose Johnson and Chris Stoneham (ECC), Steve Mills (BAA), Kris Radley (ERTP) and Richmond's Coaches.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 25 APRIL 2006

2.1. These were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as an accurate record.

3. ACTION ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1. On Minute 4.1, Jeremy Pine had now received a reply from Thaxted Parish Council, which would be discussed later on in the agenda. A copy of the reply had been sent to Peter Blanchard.

3.2. On Minute 4.2, Catherine Gaywood had referred the concern to colleagues at County Hall. Catherine Dean emphasised that a bus stop provided with a timetable window (kept up to date) was sufficient.

3.3. On Minute 4.4, conformation had been received from Mouchel Parkman that their study did include looking at the possibility of "Park and Ride" at Audley End station. Catherine Gaywood said that the study report was a large one and had been prepared with the co-operation of ECC, One Railway and Network Rail. The Forum awaited sight of the report. In relation to Minute 6.3, One Railway had written to Paul Garland explaining that DDA provision at the station was too expensive (£100k for handrail, ramp, lighting and cctv). An approach to Sir Alan Haselhurst had resulted in a reply from Derek Twigg, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the DfT. He had suggested a bid under the Small Schemes Fund, where match funding up to £250k was available.

The Forum considered that £100k sounded a lot for the works involved, but given the significance of Audley End station was still worth it. Catherine Gaywood advised that the cost was probably related to the need to use licensed contractors.

Sue Locke said that the Essex Access Forum had direct access to One, and agreed to meet with LA21 to take the matter forward. **Sue Locke and Paul**

Garland to action. There was a need to look at how to apply for funding. It was felt that the 2012 Olympics could give some impetus, as could the fact that Audley End operators were National Express owned.

3.4. On Minute 4.8, Jeremy Pine said that he had not received a reply from Network Rail about the Elsenham level crossing, but local newspaper coverage had been quite extensive. Through the coverage, it was understood that a ticket machine would be installed on the northbound platform and a “second train approaching” audible warning would be installed. Jackie Cheetham welcomed this, and said that she had noticed increased signalman activity recently at the crossing. There were many issues regarding the installation of a footbridge. She was concerned at the lack of facilities to pay on board trains (except Stansted Express).

4. SAFFRON WALDEN CYCLE CAMPAIGN

4.1. Ian Willard explained that the SWCC was an offshoot of LA21, and had been established as a follow-up to the Mouchel Parkman cycleway study. The SWCC had an increasing mailing list, currently standing at 35.

4.2. It was generally accepted that Wenden Road was dangerous for walkers and cyclists, but many wanted to either walk or cycle. Some safety improvements were wanted; off-road, on-road or a mixture.

4.3. One problem was that cyclists were not well organised until now. Working with local government was wanted, and there was contact with the Essex Cycling Forum. UDC-wide promotion of cycling was important.

4.4. ECC has a cycling strategy and LTP2 obliges Districts and Boroughs to promote cycling – the aim is to quadruple cycling from its current level. LTP2 was heavy on road schemes and a real commitment towards short cycle journeys was needed. An issue was how to get One Railway to respond, as more on-station facilities were needed.

4.5. Ian Willard asked the following questions, for later response:

- What was the status of the Mouchel Parkman study and the Audley End gateway project?
- How does UDC fit in – does it have a cycling officer?
- Is there a local cycling policy?
- How do the “Safe Routes to School” and “In Town Without My Car” schemes fit in?
- Were there examples of good local deliveries of cycling schemes?

4.6. David Gregory mentioned the Flitch Way and airport links, and also that ECC were looking at the designation of Quiet Lanes in Felsted (exhibition forthcoming). Catherine Dean referred to a similar forthcoming exhibition in Ugley. Jackie Cheetham mentioned that ECC had gated the Flitch Way and referred to the previously unsuccessful campaign for a cycleway along the old A120.

4.7. In answer to a query from Jackie Cheetham, Jeremy Pine gave an update on progress with the Audley End – Saffron Walden cycleway. **Ian Willard to pass his group's suggestions for advancement of the project to Jeremy Pine. Subject to funding being available, Jeremy Pine would then contact the West Area Highway Office with a view to securing any follow-up work needed as a result of the previous Mouchel Parkman study.**

4.8. It was agreed that it was essential to keep locals informed of progress, especially Wendens Ambo Parish Council. Ian Willard noted that there was a lot of resistance to schemes, and that many cyclists preferred to cycle on the road. There would be a need to present the results of any follow-up work to the North Area Panel. Jeremy Pine said he had heard via the Area Highway Office that some LTP2 funding for the cycleway was available, but he was waiting for confirmation of this in the quarterly liaison meeting minutes.

(Footnote: It has been confirmed by ECC in those minutes that £135k is now available for the new cycleway in 2008/9 in the LTP2 list).

4.9. Paul Garland said that it was necessary also to cater for people who wanted to cycle into the town centre by providing secure parking. It should also be made easier for people to own bikes and to store them, especially in low cost houses. David Gregory referred to the underused lockable bike stores in the White Street car park in Gt Dunmow, that Councillors Hibbs and Gayler were keen on lobbying for cyclists and that Carver Barracks wanted a route into the town. Ian Willard confirmed that the Commanding Officer had written to this effect. Jackie Cheetham felt that a survey of cyclists' use of the town centre was required – there was a problem identifying suitable cycle storage areas in and around the Market Square. Cycle hooks in garages and houses would assist with cycle storage.

4.10. Sue Mayer felt that the UALC newsletter could ask what provision was needed in every village.

4.11. Ian Willard asked who was responsible for bike racks at railway stations. Catherine Gaywood confirmed that it was Network Rail, but Sue Locke noted that there were difficulties with providing adequate storage facilities after the recent terrorist attacks. However, it was felt that the use of Perspex covers should overcome security worries.

5. INTEGRATED PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR SAFFRON WALDEN

5.1. David Corke presented the report which he had prepared, and which he noted had actually been released on the date of the last meeting of the Forum. His principal aim was to get the Villagelink 5 service to link Thaxted and Debden with Audley End station. Following meetings with ECC, he was pleased to note that this was being looked at. This would necessitate usage surveys and consultations. He acknowledged that lengthening the route would bring the service within EU drivers' hours regulations, not domestic ones which would have implications for crewing and timetabling. He was also pleased to note that his work was being taken into account by Mouchel

Parkman in its Audley End station hub study.

5.2. His second main concern was bus stops and the information contained therein. Having accurate, up to date and easily understandable timetables at each stop was more important than telematics.

5.3. He was also excited about the use of Stratford International station as an interchange, but disappointed at recent claims that it could become a White Elephant because Eurostar would not stop its service there due to proximity to St Pancras. These claims appeared to be borne out by a letter from Derek Twigg to Sir Alan Haselhurst. David Corke said that both One and /or Central Railways should be encouraged to run services that terminate at Stratford as it has good onward links to London. It was also heavily populated by people needing employment and who could “reverse commute” to fill job vacancies. He wondered how suggestions could be got through to the train operators.

5.4. David Corke said it was essential that those who were entitled to a free bus pass knew about it. The new scheme had been introduced in a hurry and had been poorly publicised because the relevant Government guidance was late. Uttlesford Life should be used, and an application form could be sent out with all April 2007 Council Tax demands. UDC’s website needed to be made more user friendly. With local elections due next year, he remarked that the 15,000 entitled to a free bus pass constituted 25% of the electorate.

5.5. Jackie Cheetham said that her main shopping venue was Bishop’s Stortford, but it was time-consuming to get there by bus as they all went via the airport. Timetabling and frequency were important to encourage bus use. The Audley End link was admirable, but bus / rail times also required co-ordination. It was confirmed to her that free bus passes could be used across the County border provided it was on a single journey that either started from or finished in Essex.

5.6. David Corke felt it was a losing battle trying to convince shoppers to use buses, especially for the weekly food shop. Buses were used where it was appropriate.

5.7. Peter Blanchard referred to the differing requirements of the domestic and EU drivers’ hours regulations. EU regulations required the fitting of tachographs and added about 50% to service costs. In the past, operators had avoided the EU requirements by registering 3 separate services with one vehicle. However, Arriva and Stagecoach were taken to court, were found guilty and were fined. As a result, the services were abandoned. David Corke said that Villagelink 5 served one set of passengers south of the airport and another to the north, so any break could be taken at the airport?

5.8. Peter Blanchard reminded the Forum that Villagelink 5 provided a town service in the south of Saffron Walden and that there was good patronage from Ross Close and Cromwell Road. It also provided capacity to the County High School.

5.9. Catherine Gaywood emphasised that the free bus pass scheme was paid for by UDC, but ECC had organised a countywide scheme to enable countywide travel. It was up to UDC to promote the scheme. All the Government funding went into a central pot, but UDC didn't know what its full costs would be. David Corke noted that UDC was missing out on notifying those who were entitled to a free bus pass because they didn't have a driving licence for medical reasons.

5.10. Peter Blanchard said the free bus pass scheme cost him £500 / month and was a nightmare. He had received no reimbursement from Cambridgeshire CC. Jackie Cheetham said that she knew that bus operators were having problems with the scheme, and Paul Garland suggested that representations be made to Central Government. Catherine Gaywood thought that the timing would be good, as the indications were that the nationwide 2008 scheme would be a mess. **All comments to be included in the letter to DfT to be passed to Jeremy Pine in time for dispatch prior to 9/8/06. Copy of letter to be sent to Sir Alan Haselhurst.**

6. MARKETING BUS ROUTES IN THE DISTRICT

6.1. Paul Garland ran through the 2-page paper that he had prepared. He summarised why he felt marketing was important, and how obstacles to bus use could be identified and removed. He suggested that some locally focussed research of users and potential users be carried out with the help of voluntary groups such as LA21. It was extremely important that bus use was not seen as an index of social failure, and that the tawdry image of some services be tackled.

6.2. He made the following suggestions for improvements to services:

- Co-ordinated timetabling, including with rail
- Accessible, up to date information on routes and times to be widely displayed and home-delivered
- Real time information to be installed on principal routes
- Clear destination, route and route number information to be displayed on buses
- Service reliability information to be prominently displayed and easily available
- Buses should be clean, accessible to all and comfortable and with adequate room for shopping, luggage and buggies
- An incentivised fare structure that encourages bus travel, and which is widely advertised on route, in the press and in public places
- Advanced purchase of tickets from designated outlets
- Quality Bus Partnership creating an inter-urban route from Cambridge to Chelmsford passing through Saffron Walden, Thaxted, Gt Dunmow. This could be co-ordinated with feeder routes and/or park and ride facilities at key points.

6.3. Jackie Cheetham felt that there was a need to defend some of the services, as some were good. She asked whether the EU regulations would stop a Cambridge – Chelmsford service at Saffron Walden. For legal reasons, there wasn't much co-operation between bus operators and a more

integrated system was needed. Things had been done in London because the Mayor was the sole legislator. The cost of an Oyster card type system would be high, but a “carnet” type system or through-ticketing might be more achievable. Peter Blanchard said that he did provide season tickets on his services and asked ECC to do the same for its own ones.

6.4. Ian Willard asked who took the lead in providing bus information and was informed it was ECC. He said there was inadequate information at Audley End.

6.5. Catherine Gaywood said that invitations to tender for contracts for both urban and rural services had gone out. Urban timetables would be based on lists of times, as passengers weren’t really interested in who the operator was. The rural timetable would be more traditional, but with more detail, larger lettering and use of colour.

6.6. Peter Carmichael explained that passengers with disabilities who were unable to use buses derived no benefit from free passes. UCT provided 20,000 journeys per year for these people, who had to pay. Others also derived no benefit where there were no buses.

6.7. Sue Locke asked whether the UDC noticeboard could be used for timetable display, and Jackie Cheetham felt that Town and Parish Councils should be encouraged to consider how locally information could be displayed. Peter Blanchard pointed out that he could still not find a bus timetable in UDC’s Dunmow offices.

6.8. David Corke said that ECC’s Passport to Travel for Uttlesford was out of date. It showed only 18 regular useful services and had a confusion of routes operated only at school times. A revised map was required showing only the more frequent services. This could be published in Uttlesford Life.

6.9. David Gregory felt that there would be merit in running the 133 service into Braintree station (see footnote to Minute 8.1). The summer Sunday timetable needed an index of routes and destinations. The main timetable had an index of places served from Saffron Walden and Harlow, the same was needed for the airport, plus how to get there by public transport.

6.10. David Corke referred to the ability to send a text message to the travel line with the bus stop code, and to receive a reply text indicating when the next bus is due.

7. BUS STOP FACILITIES IN THAXTED

7.1. Peter Blanchard confirmed that he had received a copy of the reply from Thaxted Parish Council. He was not satisfied that it met the needs of the bus operators, but merely seemed to promote free parking. Catherine Gaywood confirmed that she had asked the Area Highways Office to deal, and there had been some positive contact with the Parish Council. It was proposed to the Parish Council that the bus stop would be relocated to its original position, a build out constructed and appropriate road markings to be applied. The

Parish Council was to vote on the proposals. Jackie Cheetham pointed out that ECC's portfolio holder would be the final decision maker.

8. NEW BUS / COACH STATION AT STANSTED AIRPORT – UPDATE

8.1. In Steve Mills' absence, Jeremy Pine reported that construction was on schedule. Canopy construction would begin during August, and would be complete by the end of November, even better if it could be completed by the date of the Annual meeting of the Stansted Area Transport Forum earlier in the month. Currently, services were being operated out of temporary stands down the flanks of the bus / coach station. This operation was being overseen by the Bus / Coach Working Group of the Stansted Area Transport Forum.

Footnote: The First Group are introducing a new Braintree – Gt Dunmow – Stansted Airport service (X20) on 25th August on an hourly frequency, Monday to Saturday, complementing the existing X22 to give what will be a half hourly service by bus from Braintree to the airport. Journey time from Dunmow to Stansted Airport will be 12 mins, as will be the time to Braintree rail station. The service will also penetrate into Gt Notley. A new demand responsive service has commenced, known as the Stansted Flyer, which serves a number of areas in South Essex and East London, operated by Gatwick Flyer who have operated a Gatwick service for 19 years. Information can be found on www.Gatwickflyer.co.uk

9. RECENT GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE FOR TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

9.1. In Murray Hardy's absence, this item was deferred.

10. INFORMATION TO ACCOMPANY FREE BUS PASSES FOR PENSIONERS

10.1. This item had been dealt with in items 5 and 6.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1. David Gregory referred to the Blue Triangle heritage bus route that ran once a month on Sundays between Harlow – Braintree and the banana factory – Witham. He felt that this should be included in What's On, and he also considered that it could become a heritage route within Uttlesford. **David Gregory to speak to UDC tourism.**

11.2. Jackie Cheetham referred to nuisance being caused to Takeley residents by National Express positioning its coaches from the Start Hill depot to the airport via Parsonage Road. Jeremy Pine confirmed that this had already been taken up with BAA Stansted, and he had received a reply from Steve Mills confirming that he had instructed National Express to stop.

11.3. David Corke referred to the forthcoming withdrawal by the Royal Mail of the Post Bus service from Saffron Walden to Littlebury. This had not appeared in the July / August edition of Bus Passenger News. The Royal Mail had said that the contract had been withdrawn, but ECC said that Royal Mail

didn't want to tender this time. ECC were looking at alternative solutions. He also referred to the number 7 Saffron Walden – Cottenham via Cambridge service in the same edition, which was a renumbering of the old 32 service. This was a Cambridgeshire CC service that ECC supported.

11.4. Peter Blanchard referred to the improved 59 service from Clavering to Saffron Walden and Haverhill that he introduced last year and which partly replaces Post Bus.

11.5. Sue Mayer complained that ECC was slow in cutting some grass verges – and not at all in some places. She also asked what the criteria were for installing permanent speed cameras, as there had been a number of speed related accidents in Lt Hallingbury. David Gregory referred to a scheme where the Police trained residents to use a speed gun and to report persistent offenders. Catherine Gaywood said that motorists seemed to respond more to variable message signs, and Jackie Cheetham said that speed cameras in Takeley were causing problems because of motorists speeding up and slowing down.

12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

12.1. Tuesday 24 October 2006 at 10.00am at the UDC Great Dunmow offices.