

**Agenda Item No.4**  
**UTTLESFORD LOCAL AGENDA 21 TRANSPORT GROUP**  
**Saffron Walden High Street Bus Survey**  
**October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006**

**SUMMARY**

This survey was undertaken to establish some reliable data on which to base recommendations for the improvement of public transport serving Saffron Walden and its outlying villages.

**The survey revealed that the buses serving the town and its hinterland are unreliable, often inadequate, frequently not properly signed, and operating to timetables which are either confusing or absent. A large number of the services are only usable by those ‘in the know’. As it operated on the day of the survey, the public transport system for the area is an obstacle to the promotion of public transport in accordance with the objectives of Essex County Council’s Transport Policy 2006/11.**

**A brief summary of the findings follows:**

- The two bus stops on either side of the High Street are used by virtually all the routes serving the Town and hence constitute a *de facto* ‘bus station’.
- There was a throughput of 821 passenger journeys either boarding, alighting or remaining on the 167 buses.
- There are supposedly 21 routes of which only seven run at up to two hourly intervals. The rest are once a day in each direction. Many of these are school buses which are theoretically available for public use, but are not regarded as public buses by either the drivers or the public.
- Many of the scheduled buses did not appear on the day of the survey.
- For those buses which did appear, timekeeping was uniformly poor, ranging from more than 10min early to more than 20min late. Twenty timetabled connections between routes were consequently missed.
- Very few buses complied fully with ECCs requirement that they should display route number and destination clearly on the front and the route number on the back, together with a clear indication of the operator’s name. The only exception was the Citi 7 Cambridge service. The route 34 ‘Town Service’ did not always advertise itself as such.
- The two bus stops, which are the principal bus stops in Uttlesford are lacking in all the proper facilities required of a *de facto* bus station, including adequate and clearly displayed information on routes and departure times.
- The consequence of the lack of adequate information is that only regular users ‘in the know’ about a particular route, such as school pupils, retired shoppers and regular train commuters, can use the buses with any confidence. The service is practically unusable for visitors, casual travellers and the disabled.

**FURTHER FINDINGS**

- The routes are not properly co-ordinated with each other or with the train times at nearby Audley End Station.
- Many bus stops in the town and surrounding villages do not exist as physical entities, or, where they do have a post and flag, lack timetable, SMS code, route numbers, and shelter. The stop designation on the flags does not correspond to that used by Traveline.
- The ticketing system is specific to the company running the bus and not the route, which is often shared between a number of companies.
- Tickets are only available on the bus at the time of travel, which considerably lengthens the journey time.

- The fare structure is opaque, often illogical and lacks a range of fare types.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All existing bus stops to display both ECC stop name and Traveline designation, the route numbers serving the stop and the SMS code.	<b>ECC</b>
2. All existing bus stop posts to be equipped with timetable boards with information on the lines of the Wimbish example appended.	<b>ECC</b>
3. All principal stops in the town and surrounding villages to be equipped with an adequate bus shelter with seating and supporting travel information.	<b>ECC</b>
4. All buses to display information on route and destination as stipulated by ECC.	<b>Operators/ ECC</b>
5. All buses to display reliability information and timetables inside the bus.	<b>Operators/ ECC</b>
6. Routes serving railway stations to be co-ordinated with train departure/arrival times as far as possible.	<b>Operators/ ECC</b>
7. Existing 590 route from Saffron Walden to Audley End Station to be replaced with two routes serving the north and south of the town respectively and to be extended to meet London trains arriving up to 11.24pm.	<b>Operators/ ECC</b>
8. A comprehensive bus information board to be provided by the Town Council in the Market Square.	<b>SWTC</b>
9. Bus stop waiting areas to be kept clean and tidy.	<b>UDC</b>
10. The potential for publicising timetables for the appropriate routes through Uttlesford Life, the Council's website and other means of promotion be investigated, together with encouragement to consider the 'green' transport option.	<b>UDC/ECC</b>

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Chairman  
Uttlesford Local Agenda 21

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