

**UTTLESFORD TRANSPORT FORUM  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2008 AT DISTRICT  
COUNCIL OFFICES, HIGH STREET, GREAT DUNMOW, ESSEX**

**THOSE PRESENT**

District Councillors Elizabeth Bellingham-Smith, Jackie Cheetham and Catherine Dean, Murray Hardy, Sue Locke and Jeremy Pine (UDC), Anna Hook, Wendy Jackson and Moira Mason (ECC), David Corke and Paul Garland (LA21 now Sustainable Uttlesford), Sean Bailey and Mags Guyan (West Essex PCT), Peter Blanchard (Walden Travel / CPT Essex), Sue Meyer (UALC), Steve Mills (BAA Stansted) and David Rose (Uttlesford Community Travel).

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1. Apologies were received from District Councillors Keith Eden and Mark Lemon, Rose Johnson and Chris Stoneham (ECC), Barry Drinkwater (ULODA), Kris Radley (RCCE) and Ian Willard (Saffron Cycle Campaign).

**2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

2.1. Councillor Jackie Cheetham chaired the Forum. As the Forum had not had a permanent Chairman since the last District Council elections, she announced that Councillor Keith Eden had agreed to take on this role at future meetings.

**3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 25 OCTOBER 2007**

3.1. These were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as an accurate record subject to 2 amendments:

- Re Minute 6.3, David Corke had not said that telematics could help with Saffron Walden services, but the Great Dunmow system could be made to work better.
- Re Minute 13.1, the reference should be to David Rose, not David Corke.

**4. ACTION ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1. Re Minute 13.3 concerning the Sustainable Communities Strategy Workshop, **Jeremy Pine would speak to the Chairman about who from the Forum ought to be the representative on the Board of Uttlesford Futures.**

**5. PROPOSED REVIEW OF BUS SERVICES IN UTTLESFORD - UPDATE**

5.1. Wendy Jackson explained the progress that was being made with the review. A lot of background work was being done at ECC. The aim was to use existing financial resources, focussing on commuter, shopping and school day journeys. The task was bigger than anticipated, resulting in the north of the District being looked at first. Elements of the review included:

- Minimum service levels
- Disability planning
- Contracts expiring in September '08
- Existing commercial bus network
- Walking distances to bus stops
- Withdrawal of funding from other Councils
- Post Office closures
- Concessionary fares decisions

5.2. Wendy Jackson explained that there was no current timescale, but updates would be given at future Forum meetings. Kris Radley had been asked to carry out on-bus surveys. Discussions would be held with bus operators and the UCT. The pupil intake in September '08 also had to be considered.

5.3. In answer to questions from Jackie Cheetham, Wendy Jackson confirmed that the review in the south of the District would be along similar lines. She couldn't say whether that part of the review would be this year.

5.4. Peter Blanchard confirmed that he was speaking with the relevant ECC officer and was going over to Chelmsford for a meeting. He did express caution, however. His company was paying 29% more / litre of diesel this year than last, which was now the 2<sup>nd</sup> biggest cost behind labour. In addition, he had experienced a 15% across the board drop in cash paying passengers on local buses within Uttlesford. Other operators were experiencing the same, perhaps indicating a recession. The operators were already subsidising the concessionary fares scheme due to insufficient Government funding.

5.5. Paul Garland said that the economic situation facing the operators indicated how important it was to increase bus patronage. There were some anomalies that needed looking at. He highlighted service 301, which arrived at Audley End station just after a train departed. Wendy Jackson said that a shuttle type service to the station was a possibility in the RCCE Links document.

5.6. David Corke was worried about the review timetable. As yet, there was no outline of any proposals. He wondered about how / when consultation would be carried out if it was to take into account the September '08 contract issues. He was also concerned about splitting the review into north and south, as some bus routes went through both areas. In reply, Wendy Jackson said that a clean north / south split was obviously impossible. Consultation would be carried out as soon as possible, hopefully in time for the April meeting of the Forum.

5.7. Sue Locke said that station car parking charges (at about £5 / day) made getting onto the bus worth exploring. Putting service numbers on bus stop flags would encourage usage. Wendy Jackson confirmed that publicity was a concern, and she was working with Anna Hook from ECC's Publicity and Marketing Department.

5.8. The Forum welcomed Anna Hook to her first meeting. She explained that a new look for bus stop flags was being developed, with the aim of better clarity and cost effectiveness. There would be a “*standard*” flag and an “*enhanced*” one. In answer to a question from Sue Locke, she confirmed that the “*standard*” flag would not have the bus number on it. The “*enhanced*” one would, and would be used at stops where there are a number of services and also at interchanges. Noting the concern about lack of service numbering on “*standard*” flags, it was ECC’s aim to improve timetable information at all bus stops.

5.9. Paul Garland was disappointed that “*standard*” flags would not have service numbers on them. The option was stickers. Anna Hook said she hoped that all stops served by “*standard*” flags would have timetable frames. David Corke said that all stops needed to have the Traveline telephone number as well as SMS identification. Anna Hook confirmed that a decision had been made not to include the Traveline number, but SMS details were on a lot of timetable information. In answer to a question from Catherine Dean, she believed that poles would be changed at the same time as the flags. Sue Locke said that she still felt that numbers on bus stops were more important than a timetable, as you could always ask the driver.

5.10. Anna Hook introduced the new timetable format to the Forum, and passed samples round the table. The aim was a uniform countywide look. Glitches were currently being ironed out to ensure accuracy of data. To make things more manageable, it had been agreed that there would be 12 timetable change dates every year. Timetable cases were being replaced – piloting had taken place in Chelmsford with initial rollout in Colchester. In answer to queries, she confirmed that the printing would be larger than on the samples, but she didn’t think that there was a representative from bus users on the working group that was looking at timetable information.

5.11. The Chairman invited any further comments on the RCCE document circulated with the minutes of the previous meeting. There were none.

## **6. WITHDRAWAL OF BUS SERVICES**

6.1. This item had been requested by David Rose. He was concerned at news of the withdrawal of services 26 and 43 and the resultant impact on the north of the district. He acknowledged from the Jan / Feb ’08 edition of Bus Passenger News that Richmond Coaches now operated the 26 between Berden – Manuden – Bishop’s Stortford.

6.2. Wendy Jackson confirmed that the withdrawals had come about because of changes to contracts administered by Herts CC. Essex CC had stepped in to safeguard the 26 until the end of the financial year due to the adverse effects on local residents. The longer term issues were still being looked at. ECC could not fund the 43, so that had been withdrawn. Peter Blanchard explained that Herts CC did things differently to Essex CC. Within Hertfordshire, some funding was provided by District Councils. In these 2

particular cases, North Herts DC was no longer willing to provide funding. Jeremy Pine said that this confirmed what he had been told by a contact at Herts CC.

## **7. PROPOSED FORECOURT IMPROVEMENTS AT AUDLEY END STATION**

7.1. Jeremy Pine explained that the bus turning trial had not proved successful, resulting in ECC and its consultants coming up with a revised forecourt arrangement. He had attended a meeting at County Hall 2 days ago, when revised proposals based on a three-point turn area for buses had been introduced by Waterman Civils. The revised proposals would result in the loss of some on site car parking which was of concern to Network Rail, but the other benefits of the original scheme (including a new bus shelter) would be retained.

7.2. An assurance had been received that Essex CC would consult with Wendens Ambo Parish Council, as the next meeting of the Forum was not until April. One Railway would also carry out consultation with the bus operators and taxi drivers. Implementation would now slip into 2008/9.

7.3. In answer to a query from David Corke, Jeremy Pine confirmed that the consultants were looking at the problem of waiting buses. Paul Garland said the loss of parking spaces needed to be weighed against the benefits of attracting increased public transport patronage. He was concerned that no one from the rail industry attended the Forum meetings. **Jeremy Pine to re-establish contact with One Railway and Network Rail and to invite them to future meetings.**

## **8. STANSTED AIRPORT GENERATION 1 – UPDATE ON PUBLIC INQUIRY**

8.1. Jeremy Pine said that Uttlesford had been informed that the Inspector's report had been received by the Planning Inspectorate, indicating that things were more or less on time. He also gave a brief rundown on what was likely to be submitted as part of Generation 2.

*(Note: confirmation has subsequently been received that the Department for Communities and Local Government now has the report).*

## **9. NEW BUS / COACH STATION AT STANSTED AIRPORT - UPDATE**

9.1. Steve Mills announced that repairs were now complete and Café Alba, which would be open 24 hrs / day, was opening that afternoon. Internet access would be available by the end of the week. Finishing off / hoarding removal would be by the end of the following week. The Uttlesford Access Group would now be invited to visit the bus / coach station to give its comments. He confirmed that there were 138 seats inside the waiting area, with a further 30 – 40 in Café Alba. There were also some outdoor seats.

9.2. He confirmed that the Real Time Information tender would be awarded next month. The system would display scheduled information where RTI was not available.

## **10. PROGRESS ON LA21'S REPORT ON THE PROVISION OF BUS SERVICES**

10.1. Paul Garland confirmed that LA21 was now called Sustainable Uttlesford, as it was less obscure.

10.2. David Corke passed round a 3-page paper that he had prepared summarising what had been hoped for in the original LA21 report. He was pleased to see that most of the items on page 1 were happening now. He re-emphasised the need to remove non-used non-key stops from the database. He highlighted the following issues from the paper:

- Lack of availability of, or knowledge about the quarterly timetable book
- Unwieldy size of the quarterly timetable book
- Fare tables on buses
- Use / availability of Day Villager tickets
- Clarity of the Essex County bus map compared to others.

10.3. The Chairman answered concerns over the potential closure of the Tourist Information Centre by saying she was hopeful that it would be taken over by Saffron Walden Town Council.

10.4. The Chairman asked whether there was a website containing all ticketing information. Anna Hook said there wasn't. David Corke remarked that ECC's website says that fares are going up. The Chairman also asked whether it was possible just to tell passengers what they could do. **Anna Hook to report back on this.** David Corke said it would be useful as a starting point just to quote the adult single as the worse case scenario.

10.5. Anna Hook confirmed that the best publicity seemed to be either direct to door or at the bus stop. The least effective was the timetable book.

10.6. Paul Garland queried whether it was feasible to have fares tables on buses. Peter Blanchard said that fares details are on the drivers' electronic ticket machines. He didn't print fares chart and hadn't ever found it a problem.

10.7. Steve Mills and Anna Hook confirmed that there was liaison between BAA and ECC to answer some criticisms from the public at the lack of local bus information at the airport. A booklet was being prepared. Steve Mills also confirmed that cycle shelters were provided in the short stay car park.

## **11. ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA**

11.1. Jeremy Pine requested that any items be notified to him by Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at the latest. The bus services review (Minute 5) and the Audley End forecourt improvements (Minute 7) would be rolled forward items.

11.2. As the new nationwide concessionary fares scheme would be introduced before the next forum meeting in April, this would be a useful updating item.

11.3. Murray Hardy asked for the transport implications of the forthcoming Saffron Walden Carnival to be included.

11.4. Paul Garland asked for transport priorities relating to the Uttlesford Futures conference that was held last Autumn to be included. He chaired the Environment Working Group, but was concerned that specific transport priorities were not being dealt with. An action plan was needed by the middle of February.

## **12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

12.1. Sue Locke followed up on the licensing implications for the voluntary car services that had been mentioned at the last meeting. It now seemed that there were none. Murray Hardy confirmed that the issue revolved around what was deemed to be a real commercial benefit.

12.2. Steve Mills notified the Forum that a new Stansted Airport - Ipswich bus service run by Excel would start on 1<sup>st</sup> May this year. The service would run every 2 hrs, 24 hrs / day. It would be registered as a local bus service, attracting concessionary fares.

12.3. On a general point of concessionary fares, Wendy Jackson confirmed that eligible hours would be 0930 – 2300 weekdays and all day weekends and Bank / Public Holidays. An earlier 0900 start would not be used due to lack of Government funding. On the question of recompense, Peter Blanchard pointed out that the average fare was about £1.50. Cambs CC paid £1.10, Suffolk just under £1 and Essex 49p. Operators would not be granting any exceptions to the 0930 start therefore. There might be a special flat rate. Wendy Jackson said that there were issues to consider where there wasn't an alternative bus to one that departed before 0930.

12.4. Jeremy Pine gave a short update on Network Rail's Greater Anglia Route Utilisation Strategy (RUS). He had attended a briefing at Liverpool Street yesterday. He highlighted 2 of the options in the RUS that affected the West Anglia Main Line. These were:

- Option 8 – lengthening peak services between Cambridge / Stansted Airport and Liverpool Street, 2009-12, and
- Option 12 – Increase capacity on the West Anglia Main Line (four tracking) 2014–2019

12.5. In answer to a question from Paul Garland, Jeremy Pine confirmed that access improvements to Audley End's northbound platform were still programmed to take place under the Government's Access for All scheme.

**13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

13.1. 10:00am on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008 at the Council Offices, Great Dunmow.