

UTTLESFORD TRANSPORT FORUM held at COUNCIL OFFICES GREAT DUNMOW on 29 JANUARY 2009 at 10.00 am

Present: District Councillors: Elizabeth Bellingham-Smith, Catherine Dean, Keith Eden (Chairman), Mark Lemon; Murray Hardy, Sue Locke, Jeremy Pine, Rebecca Procter (Uttlesford District Council Officers); Nick Blackall, Wendy Jackson (Essex County Council); David Corke and Paul Garland (Sustainable Uttlesford); Barry Drinkwater (ULODA); David Rose (Uttlesford CT), Kris Radley (RCCE).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Gilly White, Tim Bellinger and Jackie Cheetham. Steve Mills (BAA) also sent his apologies, which were picked up after the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2008 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. ACTION ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 Item 4 – Review of Bus Services

Catherine Dean said she was disappointed that certain items were repeatedly discussed with no resolution, such as timetable information at bus stops, and a bus connection between Saffron Walden and Audley End.

3.2 Nick Blackall said that the County did not control information at all bus stops, but recognised the need for higher standards in providing such information. The County had introduced a new information scheme in Chelmsford, which would be assessed and then rolled out to other districts.

3.3 Keith Eden said the formal adoption of the Transport Forum as an Uttlesford Futures Group would help provide focus for these issues.

3.4 David Corke raised the question of County Council expenditure on subsidised versus commercial services, regarding provision of timetables at bus stops. Nick Blackall said ideally all services should be of a high standard, but commercial services usually affected greater numbers of people, and priorities had to be balanced.

3.5 The need for accessible local information in electronic format was discussed, particularly in view of the increased take-up of the new concessionary bus pass scheme. Mark Lemon stressed the importance of encouraging a self-help attitude, for example in Hatfield Heath the parish magazine included bus timetables. Wendy Jackson agreed this was a valuable resource, and said she met regularly with parish representatives.

4. REVIEW OF BUS SERVICES IN UTTLESFORD

4.1 Nick Blackall gave an update on consultations in north and south Uttlesford. Parishes had indicated few problems or new service needs, although the possibility of a new link to Berden had been requested.

- 4.2 David Corke raised various questions regarding north Uttlesford, as he was aware of discrepancies on some services between the service provided and what was advertised, for example on Routes 29 and 11. He said it was disappointing that potential alterations which had been put forward during the north review had not apparently been followed up in the south review. He sought a meeting with high level representatives from County, and referred to a recent Freedom of Information Act request he had made for information on routes and costs.
- 4.3 In reply Nick Blackall said that in view of the time and costs such a request would involve it had been denied, but he would instead suggest a meeting to discuss the issues. Keith Eden suggested raising this proposal under item 6 on the agenda.
- 4.4 Catherine Dean asked about the content of the survey and questioned how comments would be published.
- 4.5 In answer, ECC Officers said the review related to bus services in general. Responses would be communicated to parish representatives.

5 SCHOOL BUS PROVISION IN NORTH UTTLESFORD

5.1 The Forum considered the draft response of the Sustainable Uttlesford Transport Group to the ECC consultation document 'Essex Schools & Colleges Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy 2007 – 2011'. In answer to a question, Nick Blackall said this consultation had originally been published on the ECC website. It had recently been more widely circulated by his colleague Charlotte Humphries, who had recently joined the team. He said comments from this group would be welcome.

5.2 David Corke said there were two areas which concerned the Forum: the structure of charging pupils over 16 years old, which varied greatly; and the issue of utilising public bus provision resources to provide transport for children travelling to more remote schools, that is, where they were not entitled to free transport.

5.3 Nick Blackall accepted the charging policy contained various anomalies, and said it would be reviewed in due course.

5.4 Paul Garland asked whether this document was intended to be the grounding for school travel plans. Nick Blackall said questions regarding this area should be referred to Charlotte Humphries. He was pleased to report that the School Travel Plan Team was now within Passenger Transport, and would be able to work with that team more closely. A co-ordinator was assisting the secondary schools in Stansted and Great Dunmow, with work taking place on student behaviour, and on other transport options such as walking buses and cycling routes.

6 ROLE OF TRANSPORT FORUM IN UTTLESFORD FUTURES

6.1 Keith Eden said it was important to agree how the Forum's meetings would tie in and to clarify how such issues needed to be moved forward.

6.2 Catherine Dean said that as the Forum was now part of Uttlesford Futures, it was important that those attending should be familiar with the main documents relevant to the LSP. She therefore proposed that the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement should be circulated to enable members to consider how the Forum could contribute to those strategies.

6.3 There was discussion regarding representation at meetings of Uttlesford Futures. The Forum felt it would be helpful to engage the expertise of a County Council Officer. However, the identification of an appropriate officer to advise on matters affecting travel within the district would require some thought, as areas of expertise were very diverse.

6.4 The issue of feedback from ECC to the Forum was discussed further. Wendy Jackson said where feedback was requested, ECC officers had always tried to invite those with relevant expertise to attend these meetings. She was disappointed at the view expressed earlier that such feedback was not made available.

6.5 David Corke said such information was appreciated, and said he accepted that this was challenging where no officer had an overall responsibility. Members agreed that the Forum needed to be engaged with the dual function of strategy and detailed operational issues.

6.6 The following actions were agreed:

6.6.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement be circulated to the Transport Forum by means of electronic link or hard copy if requested. JP

6.6.2 A request in writing to be sent to John Pope of Essex County Council to invite a County Council transport representative to attend meetings of Uttlesford Futures. GB

6.6.3 An action plan for the Transport Forum to be prepared, this item to be included on the next agenda. JP

7 AUDLEY END STATION UPDATE

Catherine Dean and Keith Eden declared prejudicial interests in this item, as members of Uttlesford District Council's Development Control Committee.

Mark Lemon took the Chair for this item.

7.1 Jeremy Pine gave a brief update on a planning application by National Express to extend the car park. The recommendation in the report for Development Control Committee was for approval subject to conditions.

7.2 Nick Blackall said negotiations on forecourt improvements had stalled, but that the application might get things focussed. One area of concern was the bus turning circle.

7.3 Paul Garland suggested he raise this matter on behalf of the Transport Forum, as he was due to speak at the meeting on behalf of Sustainable Uttlesford. He said planning permission should be refused until consultation had taken place on maximising alternative methods of using the station, rather than increased car parking. Jeremy Pine advised that only one objector to the application would be heard.

7.4 Murray Hardy referred to the 2006 report by Mouchel Parkman which supported that approach.

7.5 Barry Drinkwater said ULODA had not been consulted.

7.6 Nick Blackall raised a concern about parking along Wendens Ambo Road by commuters using Audley End Station. Jeremy Pine replied that Highways intended to impose a waiting restriction.

7.7 Sue Locke said she had raised the issue of disabled access and parking, and supported the imposing of conditions.

7.8 The following action was agreed:

7.8.1 Paul Garland be mandated on behalf of the Transport Forum to make representations regarding Application UTT/1692/08/FUL – Wendens Ambo on behalf of the Transport Forum to ask that conditions be imposed and to raise concerns on various matters including a fully workable design for the proposed bus turning circle, and adequate provision of disabled parking and access. PG

Keith Eden and Catherine Dean then returned to the meeting.

7.9 The Forum proceeded to discuss other matters relating to Audley End Station. Wendy Jackson said an external information display point was needed, and as the station was a listed building, planning permission for such a facility would be required.

7.10 Paul Garland reported that the Saffron Cycle Group were seeking safety measures regarding blind corners on Wendens Ambo Road. They intended to propose to Highways a cost-effective solution of double white lines on blind corners, plus a pedestrian set-aside area.

8 STANSTED GENERATION 2 UPDATE

8.1 Jeremy Pine gave an update on the planning inquiry due on 15 April 2009. Duration of the inquiry would be 35 - 50 weeks. Taking into account breaks and holidays, it would effectively last for approximately 15 - 20 months.

8.2 There had been much debate on the format, parallel sessions now being unlikely to be favoured. Phased submissions of proofs of evidence were likely. Transport was now likely to be one of the last main topics dealt with at the inquiry.

8.3 Officers were now holding meetings with counsel, and would keep the Transport Forum updated.

9 BUS/COACH STATION AT STANSTED AIRPORT

9.1 Jeremy Pine said that the issues regarding the roof canopy and all safety barriers had either now been completed or were well underway, and there had been no recent operational problems. He was receiving updates from the Bus and Coach Working Group.

10 ITEMS FOR NEXT AGENDA

10.1 The next agenda would include items on the following:

- LSP and LAA documents
- Outcomes from today's meeting
- Review of list of invitees to increase attendance at Forum meetings

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Details of the service provided by Cross Country Trains were mentioned, including a useful service on its website for creating personal timetables for any journey in the country.

11.2 The Forum also noted that Stansted Airport Station was again now able to sell off-peak travelcards, but that this service was only available to Uttlesford residents bringing proof of residence.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 The next meeting would be on Thursday 30 April 2009 at 10.00 am in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Great Dunmow.

12.2 The meeting ended at 12 pm.