

Appendix 1

Notes of a remote meeting of the East Cambs Bus Services Review Working Party held on Thursday, 8th October 2020 at 6.00pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Alan Sharp
Cllr David Ambrose Smith
Cllr Charlotte Cane
Cllr Lorna Dupré
Cllr Lis Every
Cllr Simon Harries

OFFICERS

Sally Bonnett – Infrastructure & Strategy Manager
Tracy Couper – Democratic Services Manager

IN ATTENDANCE

Oliver Howarth – Bus Strategy Manager, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority

25. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Alan Sharp was appointed as Chairman of the Working Party for the municipal year.

26. APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

28. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2020 were agreed.

29. CPCA BUS REFORM PROJECT UPDATE

The Working Party received a verbal report from Oliver Howarth, Bus Strategy Manager, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, on the CPCA Bus Reform project. Mr Howarth reported that the work of the Combined Authority had been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, but work was now progressing to agree a new franchising deal. Due to Covid-19, this would be reliant on Government subsidies and talks were proceeding with the Department of Transport on the issue. Mr Howarth explained that services

could take the form of Demand Response Transport (DRT) or Mobility as a Service (MAAS). However, in East Cambridgeshire the Combined Authority (CA) was proposing the trialling of additional bus services rather than DRT. In response to questions by Members as to the reasons for this, Mr Howarth stated that this was mainly due to the geography and rural nature of the District.

A Member referred to the East Cambs Connect service, which had been a semi-DRT service. Mr Howarth highlighted a good video on YouTube relating to DRT from Go2Sevenoaks. The Member suggested that useful information could be gathered by the CA from the experiences of the East Cambs Connect service.

Members commented that a layered approach to bus services was needed in rural areas like East Cambs and Fenland. Members expressed disappointment that this District was not being considered for DRT. Many villages had empty double decker buses going through them due to the infrequent services and DRT could ensure better usage. In response, Mr Howarth stated that double decker buses were cheaper and more reliable to operate than smaller vehicles. However, Members highlighted the difficulties faced by double deckers on narrow, winding and poorly maintained rural roads and the hazards they could pose to vehicles and pedestrians in areas with no pavements.

Members expressed the hope that, whilst not be trialled in East Cambs, DRT would be considered for the area in the future, particularly for those outlying rural settlements with no bus services at present. Particular attention was drawn to Isleham, which was experiencing a high level of Housing growth.

The Chairman thanked Mr Howarth for his attendance and update.

30. **BUS SERVICES CONSULTATION FEEDBACK**

The Working Party received a report detailing the results of the Bus Services public consultation exercise. Sally Bonnett, Infrastructure and Strategy Manager summarised the main findings which showed the greatest level of support for more frequent and reliable services and new routes from:

Burwell to Cambridge

Ely to Cambridge

Burwell to Ely

A Member referred to the lack of the ability for free text in the survey and variable level of response rates between areas. She also commented that there was an apparent discrepancy in the comments detailed and number received. Ms Bonnett commented that some villages may have had a lower response rate due to the survey 'drop boxes' being located in pubs and shops which were closed during the Covid lockdown period. Also, some Parishes appeared to have been more proactive than others. Members commented that a greater level of 'granular' information on the issue needed to be collected and interpreted.

A Member commented that a Burwell to Cambridge service would be more effective if it went to Cambridge North Station rather than just to Drummer Street Bus Station, as it would then provide links to Cambridge Regional College and rail services. Evening and Sunday services also needed to be considered. Smaller settlements would never appear on the 'Heat Maps' but, since they had fewer amenities, there was a greater need for bus services for disadvantaged groups to access the amenities in neighbouring towns and villages.

A Member acknowledged that the survey was a 'blunt instrument' and only one tool to be used in identifying the required outcomes. A greater understanding of the needs of individual Wards was required and Councillors were encouraged to provide Ms Bonnett with qualitative information from their Wards prior to or at the Member Seminar.

In addition, Ms Bonnett agreed to look at providing a breakdown of the survey results by age and postcode.

31. **EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE BUS SERVICES REVIEW ROUTE EVALUATION**

The Working Party received a proposed Bus Services Discussion Document and a draft outline submission from ECDC to the CPCA, to be considered at a remote all-Member Seminar to be held in October.

Ms Bonnett reported that it now had been agreed that the Member Seminar would take place on the next date timetabled seminar date in the Calendar of Meetings of 29 October 2020 at 6pm. Whilst proposed new bus service routes and changes to existing services were detailed in the Discussion Document, Ms Bonnett highlighted that local knowledge was needed from Councillors from feedback in their Wards.

A Member queried if the Council was 'wasting its time' with regard to what it could realistically achieve in getting new bus services. Particular attention was drawn to the criteria of 'identifying bus routes that are viable or can become viable over a period of time and to seek funding for a trial period of 5 years to allow routes to become established and self-financing' as detailed in the proposed submission to the CPCA at Appendix 2. The Member commented that this was not a realistic expectation or criteria and that the focus in a rural area like East Cambs was to look at socially necessary routes, even if they were not self-financing. Social exclusion and access for those disadvantaged and with disabilities were important issues in such areas. A key aspect of this would be faster, more reliable services, better connectivity and regular evening and weekend services. A 'mixed economy' of types of services also would be required, including smaller vehicles and DRT for more remote areas.

Ms Bonnett confirmed that the 'Heat Maps' of routes would be completed for circulation to Councillors prior to the Member Seminar.

A Member emphasised the 3 key issues of:

Inclusion – for disadvantaged groups

Environment – how to encourage less car usage in the District

Economy – how to help the District to thrive

The Chairman asked Working Party Members to submit any further proposals to Ms Bonnett by 16 October to enable her to finalise and circulate the two papers with the Heat Maps to Councillors prior to the Member Seminar.

Following further discussion, the Working Party agreed that the 5 year self-financing criteria should be removed, as it would be unrealistic and constraining.

The Working Party queried the next steps after the Member Seminar. Ms Bonnett reported that the recommended submission from ECDC to CPCA would be considered and approved at the Finance and Assets Committee meeting on 26th November 2020. Therefore, it was agreed that a further meeting of the Working Party was required in the week commencing 9 November 2020, to enable recommendations to be finalised for submission to the Finance and Assets Committee.

32. **ECDC BUS SERVICES REVIEW WORK PROGRAMME**

Members received and noted the Work Programme, which set out the tasks and key dates for the Working Party.

33. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that there would be a meeting of the Working Party in the week commencing 9 November 2020, the date to be confirmed in due course.

The meeting closed at 8pm

Appendix 1a

Notes of a remote meeting of the East Cambs Bus Services Review Working Party held on Thursday, 12th November 2020 at 6.00pm.

PRESENT

Cllr Alan Sharp
Cllr David Ambrose Smith
Cllr Lorna Dupré
Cllr Lis Every
Cllr Simon Harries

OFFICERS

Sally Bonnett – Infrastructure & Strategy Manager
Tracy Couper – Democratic Services Manager

34. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Charlotte Cane.

35. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made.

36. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2020 were agreed.

37. **DRAFT SUBMISSION TO CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY ON BUS SERVICES IN EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

The Working Party received a report from the Infrastructure & Strategy Manager, Sally Bonnett, containing the draft prospectus to Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority, on Bus Services in East Cambridgeshire. Ms Bonnett stated that the wording in the draft prospectus, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, had been amended to incorporate comments from the Member Seminar held on 29 October 2020 and these amendments had been highlighted in yellow. Ms Bonnett also referred to the revised full colour draft of the prospectus containing maps and graphics, which had been circulated to Working Party Members earlier that day (the text corresponded to that in Appendix 1).

The Working Party considered the content and format of the full colour draft of the prospectus and proposed the following amendments prior to its submission to Finance and Assets Committee on 26 November 2020 for final approval:

- Whole document – proof-read to correct spelling, language and punctuation errors.

- Page 1 paragraph 2 – replace full stop with comma and make word ‘yet’ lower case.
- Page 1 paragraph 3 - include comment that Council confident in continued demand for bus use despite Covid-19, if regular, ‘clock faced’ services are provided.
- Page 3 text relating to Map 2 – amend wording to state shows services that operate several times a day rather than at regular intervals.
- Page 9 paragraph 4 – amend to state ECDC and City of Ely Council prepared to make an initial financial commitment towards piloting potential new routes.
- Page 9 ‘potential new routes’ title – put in blue text box with yellow writing like other titles
- Page 9 – remove question marks from potential new routes.
- Page 9 two proposed Sutton to Ely Railway Station services – amend to refer to routes from Sutton linking larger settlements and outlying villages to Ely Leisure Village, Princess of Wales Hospital and Ely Railway Station.
- Page 9 penultimate paragraph – amend to read ‘but this could then be used to provide a circular route around Ely or increase the frequency of the No.9 service’.
- Page 9 – remove ‘Littleport – Ely – Soham’ service reference, as already well-served by bus and train connections.
- Page 11 paragraph 2 – amend to refer to Cambridge Railway Station. Add sentence at end of paragraph to refer to potential users of evening and Sunday services.
- Page 11 paragraph 4 – add in words ‘in East Cambridgeshire’ after words ‘transport services’.
- Page 11 paragraphs 8, 9 & 10 – amend wording to refer to complementing existing Community Transport services and include a specific reference to Isleham and smaller communities in Littleport area.
- Page 12 – amend first sentence to read ‘and move towards commercial viability,’.

The Infrastructure and Strategy Manager agreed to circulate a revised draft of the prospectus to Working Party Members on the following day, incorporating the above amendments, and requested Members to send any final comments to her by 12pm on Monday 16 November in order that the final draft of the prospectus could be prepared for despatch with the Agenda for Finance and Assets Committee on 26 November 2020.

38. **FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME & DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members received and noted the Work Programme to November 2020, which set out the tasks and key dates for the Working Party. The Infrastructure and Strategy Manager advised that a report was to be submitted to Finance and Assets Committee on 26 November 2020 proposing to amend the Terms of Reference for this Working Party to include progressing the walking and cycling strategy.

Therefore, it was agreed that, subject to the approval of the revision to its Terms of Reference, a meeting of the Working Party be scheduled early in the New Year.

The meeting closed at 7.26pm