

# Uttlesford Transport Meeting

## 10am Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 - Teams Meeting

### Meeting chaired and organised by:

Wendy Jackson, ECC, Network community and engagement Lead  
Tatiana Cullingford, ECC, Transport Officer

### Attended by:

Representatives from:

- Ashdon Parish Council
- Great Dunmow Town Council (Planning)
- Cllr Moore, Great Dunmow TC
- Cllr Armstrong, Great Dunmow TC
- Clavering Parish Council
- Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre
- Stagecoach – Transport provider
- Little Hallingbury Parish Council

ECC/IPTU attendees representing:

- Transport Officer – Local Bus Team
- Passenger Information Manager
- Transport Officer – Travel Information
- Transport Officer – Passenger Information

### Apologies received from:

Representatives from:

- Uttlesford Community Transport

## MEETING AGENDA POINTS AND QUESTIONS RAISED AND ANSWERED.

### Welcome and Introduction

Quick introduction from Wendy and welcome to everyone who were in attendance.

### Brief Overview on Enhanced Partnership/Bus Service Improvement Plan

The Government launched its National Bus Strategy (NBS), 'Bus Back Better,' in March 2021. It sets out a bold and ambitious vision for the UK's bus network and places significant expectations on LTAs for Enhanced Partnerships, with Essex entering its county-wide Enhanced Partnership in March 2022, covering the period 2022 – 2027. This can be found on the Essex Highways website.

Bus Service Improvement Plans are a key part of the strategy set by Bus Back Better. They set out the local issues relating to the bus network and how local authorities will tackle them.

As part of the BSIP, ECC commissioned twelve wholesale reviews of the commercial and supported network on a district geography basis to identify opportunities for improvement. These reviews included discussions with the local district, bus operators and consultations with residents. Each network review sets out:

- An overview of local characteristics, including geography, demographics and an overview of the local transport network and policies
- An overview of the current bus network, with consultation responses and an overview of the existing infrastructure
- Identified issues and opportunities for improving the bus network
- An aspirational future bus network, with proposed future interchanges and proposals including new routes and infrastructure

The county-wide BSIP also places an obligation for future District-wide Enhanced Partnerships to be developed. These are to be integrated with other network strategies including:

- Digital Demand Responsive Transport.



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- Bus Rapid Transit.
- Town and city future transport strategies.
- Essex Highways route development plans.
- Active Travel Strategy.
- Local Transport Plan
- Transport East proposals.
- Essex Highways Road projects.

The outcome of all 12 reviews can now be found online here: (<https://www.essexhighways.org/getting-around/bus/bus-strategy>), ECC is currently working on the 12 network reviews along with the commercial bus companies in Essex as to select which district is the first district-based EP. Copy of Chelmsford Network review included in the Meeting notes pack.

As part of the BSIP, the Council has also completed other measures to improve the accessibility of information by investing in

- a. A marketing programme (to be determined with the bus operators).
- b. A single Essex brand - buses have vinyl ads promoting the Travel Essex brand).
- c. An information portal and phone app to improve the visibility and knowledge of the bus network to the public - this website is due to be launched in Spring 2023.
- d. Agreed registration dates across the year for bus service changes.
- e. A bus passenger charter setting out what customers can expect from bus services.

We are also developing further schemes, such as the plan to extend Digital Demand Responsive Transport, such as the scheme currently operating in Braintree ("DigiGo")

- Collaborating with councils in Essex to improve and maintain around 1,300 bus shelters. The Essex Bus Shelter project will establish a 10-year contract to create a better bus shelter estate, incorporating all maintenance, cleaning, replacement, and supply of shelters. The Council expects to build 50 new bus shelters every year, from a variety of funding, for example, Section 106 Planning agreements with property developers.
- revising our transport modelling tools to ensure we have a better understanding of bus travel.
- Working with bus operators to manage the impact of changes to government funding over spring and summer

### Local Bus contract/Team update

By Transport Officer from Local Bus Team

Most of bus services in Essex (around 85%) are provided for by the commercial operator who provide their services where they feel there is commercial viability. Essex County Council do not have any authority over how these services are operated, including the routes they take, the reliability, the fares they charge, the frequency of the timetable. Instead, the regulatory body is the Traffic Commissioner for East for England.

Essex County Council provide around 15% of services, these are usually in the evenings, at the weekends, in rural areas and on some school days. These contracts are reviewed periodically, taking the cost per passenger journey (cppj) into account. However, during the Covid 19 Pandemic, the local bus team extended its contracts to maintain services during these unsettling times.

We have approximately 160 contracts, most of which are due to be tendered or extended from July 2024, but we do have a small number of contracts expiring in July 2023, so these are currently out to tender in Uttlesford:

Service Number:	Origin – Destination	Days of Operation	Current Bus Operator
306	Wichen Bonhurst – Bishop Stortford	School Days	Galleon travel 2009 Ltd
7 / 7a	Bishop Stortford – Stansted Airport	Monday – Saturday	Galleon travel 2009 Ltd



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The services are not set to change as they have been tendered like for like, so the only difference passengers may see is a different operator. Once these tender outcomes are completed and contracts have been awarded, we will let you all know about any changes that will be happening in Chelmsford area.

### Questions Raised

1. **Little Hallingbury representative:** We have concerns with one of our new bus routes 325, while it is a new bus route, it is going round a very small lane, and the size of the bus is not viable in this area, as cars are unable to pass the bus, and they have to reverse onto 1060, which is a very dangerous road. Someone needs to come out and investigate and see what the problem is that public is facing in our parish. **Added comment:** when the service was implemented, there was no publicity, so no one knows the bus schedule.

**A:** In terms of Publicity, that is something that we are definitely planning to do with all services in Uttlesford area, but we have to delay the process due reliability issues we are facing in the district and our main focus was working with Transport provider in finding a solution that would enable us to have a reliable service. So, rest assured, that is our main priority and something we have been working extremely hard in the background to get right before we start promoting buses in the area. In terms of bus size suitability for service 325, we will investigate and carry out a site visit.

2. **Little Hallingbury representative asked:** We also have issues with Service 305, which do not seem to be running properly. Pensioners are traveling to Bishop Stortford, and they often get stranded as they are unable to come back within 1-2h, they often have to wait 3-4 hours or they have to pay for a taxi to come back, and you cannot call that a bus service?

**A:** We absolutely agree that reliability has definitely been an issue in Uttlesford area, and what you described is definitely not an acceptable bus service. We are currently working with our contract management team and have an action plan in process in addition to meeting with the Transport provider on a regular basis. We cannot go into details, but there will be changes made to these services, which as a result will provide a more reliable service. We will share the changes with you as soon as we can.

3. **Clavering PC representative asked:** New DaRT 299 service, which is going to Bishop Stortford and Saffron Walden. As we are in Clavering, I have been asked to check if you can confirm does it go in both directions on different days? The previous DaRT 1 and DaRT2 used to go on some days to Bishop Stortford and others to Saffron Walden.

- 3a: **Saffron Walden TIC asked additional question:** Can you confirm what area is covered with new DaRT 299 service?

**A:** The service 299 has been tendered and covers the same areas as previous DaRT1 and DaRT2 with exception of Wimbish, Radwinter, Lindsell, Stebbing as these areas are covered by the bus services listed below. It has been tendered as Demand Service, so there is no timetable, but the operator will provide regular service on set days as block bookings. Resident in Farnham will need to contact Uttlesford Community Transport, details are shown below.

The re-designed DaRT 299 will cover the following areas: Arkesden, Berden, Chrishall, Clavering, Elmdon, Langley, Littlebury, Manuden, Quendon & Rickling, Strethall, Wenden Lofts, Wicken Bonhunt, Bardfield Saling, Chickney, Great Bardfield, Great Saling, Great Sampford, Lindsell, Little Bardfield, Little Easton, Little Sampford, Tilty, and Thaxted (where access cannot be made to the conventional bus).

These are the areas not covered by new Dart 299 and alternative services:

- Wimbish is now covered by the new 313/314 service
- Radwinter is now covered by new services 319/320/321
- Lindsell is now covered by service 322
- Stebbing is now covered by service 324
- Farnham – will need to contact Uttlesford Community Transport.

### **\*Details for Community Transport added.**

New Dart299 is due to commence on 30<sup>th</sup> of April, we will organise a meeting with parishes covered by Dart299 area to promote the service and we will send more details in the next couple of weeks.



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4. **Widdington PC asked:** We have similar problem as Little Hallingbury, with service 301 that goes through Widdington. Size of the bus is completely unsuitable for the size of our village and where it has to turn, and we are experiencing property damage when the bus has to turn around to go through the village. And reliability of this service has been also an issue.

**A:** We are aware of the issues with 3-point turn at Widdington, and it is definitely something we need to look into and find an alternative turning point, as the alternative location we looked into, it is not suitable either. Again, we will need to carry out a site visit and will liaise with your Parish Council to consider alternatives. We could also look at the vehicle size but need to consider capacity over the whole route. Reliability is also something that is one of our main priorities across the whole of the Uttlesford network.

**Saffron Walden TIC asked:** Is there any possibility of bus drivers notifying passengers of any cancelled services for passengers traveling to Bishop Stortford (i.e., bus service at 15:30 from Stortford will not be running, so that passengers can chose if they want to travel, if they cannot come back or have to wait several hours for return journey?

**A:** That would be really good, if the operators would and could collaborate with us on that. Sadly, due to driver shortage, this is not always possible. We have been working closely with the transport provider and they have been trying to recruit more drivers and are still struggling to recruit sufficient drivers to run their services. As explained above, we are working on solutions to the issues raised with the intention to improve reliability and in turn passenger confidence.

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### £2 single bus fare cap update

As I am sure many of you have heard at least parts of, there is currently a '£2 single fare cap scheme'. This was brought in through an agreement between the Department for Transport (DfT) and interested transport providers, where DfT subsidised the operator an agreed amount to take part in the scheme from the start of this year. In short regarding how the scheme works with those transport providers it applies to, for any single journey bus ticket (so not a return or weekly ticket for example) which usually costs over £2, the fare for the paying passenger during the period reduces to £2 instead. It does not matter how far the journey is either. If a transport provider took part in the scheme, it applies to all bus services they provide, commercial or supported by Essex County Council (ECC).

This scheme was set to end at the end of March 2023, however, is being extended with those providers still interested until the end of June 2023. We are not sure what impact the scheme has had on transport providers numbers or what the overall opinion of passengers has been yet, but we are hopeful of an update from DfT at some point which we eagerly await and which I expect may become national news.

**No questions Raised:**

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### Passenger Travel information

As part of the Enhanced Partnership between Essex County Council and Local Bus Operators a set of Common Registration Dates has been agreed each year for new registrations, variations, and cancellations. Agreed change dates for 2023 are as follows:

Sunday 1 January 2023

Sunday 19 February 2023

Sunday 16 April 2023

Sunday 04 June 2023

Sunday 23 July 2023

Sunday 03 September 2023

Sunday 29 October 2023



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**Roadside Posting** – We have a contract with First Essex Buses to post ECC curated roadside material in line with above change dates. This is for 6,000 artworks per annum, which we get through each year due to the number of changes! Reminder for interested people to sign up to **Transport & Travel Update**. Monthly newsletter that goes out to 20k people incl. bus timetable changes, news articles + consultations.

Passenger News is also available as part of our free Transport & Travel Update, which informs readers of road closures/incidents affecting bus services, offers and news. We would encourage you and your communities to sign for to this subscription.

Sign up here: <https://pages.news.essex.gov.uk/pages/subscribe>

Within the transport and travel update it includes bus passenger news provides information on forthcoming changes to local bus services in Essex. A summary of each change is provided monthly, but it is not possible to publish every change in detail.

If you would like further information about a particular service please contact the transport operator direct, Essex County Council or visit <https://www.traveline.info/>

Essex also has a new Journey Planner transport travel app which can be downloaded on App Store or google play. It is a free to use sustainable journey planner and helps people in Essex to plan their journeys and travel by foot, bike, bus, and train anywhere in the county. [TravelEssex | Essex County Council \(essexhighways.org\)](https://www.essexhighways.org)

### No questions Raised:

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#### **Travel Essex journey planning app**

Travel Essex is a journey planning app that allows you to search for sustainable travel options throughout Essex. You can plan journeys by walking, cycling and public transport, including train and bus.

- view routes and services from multiple bus, train transport providers throughout Essex.
- receive real-time updates, so any disruptions or service changes will not come as a surprise.
- view every stop on bus and train routes, visualized clearly on our maps. You can also track your journey in real time via GPS.

Bookings are made and paid for on the TravelEssex app which is available to download on the App Store and Google Play from this link [TravelEssex | Essex County Council \(essexhighways.org\)](https://www.essexhighways.org)

If you wish to view the video, we are played the meeting, please click the links below:

Travel Essex App <https://youtu.be/kMXTiTdx9BY>.

### Alternative Transport options in Uttlesford:

#### **\*Uttlesford Community Transport**

More information about their community schemes can be found on their website:

[Community transport - Uttlesford District Council](#)

#### **Essex and Suffolk DaRT**

To book DaRT 299, call 01621 874410 or Email: [bookings@essexandsuffolkdart.co.uk](mailto:bookings@essexandsuffolkdart.co.uk)

For more information how Demand Response transport works, please click to watch this video:

<https://youtu.be/1faG9jaONVk>

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### ❑ Realtime Information update

The Essex estate is currently just over 500 displays (excluding Southend & Thurrock). The way that our Real Time system operates is as follows; Essex County Council receives live locational tracking feeds of the buses from the operator, more recently it can be also taken from the government Bus Open Data Service. This information is interpreted and shown on the displays as real time. Our system needs the live locational information to produce the real time information, and therefore for various reasons and on certain services, we must revert to showing timetable departures due to interruption to the feed, usually for reasons out of our control. In some cases, the live tracking feature is out of the budget of some small operators in our county, and in those cases, we can only show timetable departure times.

Buses that are being tracked are shown as minutes counting down e.g., 3 mins, due. Any departures not being tracked are shown as timetable information which takes the form of the 24 hours clock e.g., 12.45, 18.10. With an untracked vehicle, once the departure time passes it will disappear from the display whether the bus has arrived or not.

Our real time service provider, in charge of managing the information that goes to the displays, are continually discussing the quality of the data with operators.

The real time system has been in Essex since 2002. Some of the displays that were installed back then are still in situ and still working. But it is becoming more difficult to keep them working. Replacement parts are now obsolete, and these displays are gradually failing.



Over the next financial year, we plan to remove some of these broken and failing displays. In some cases, we will replace them with modern television like displays but this is not the case for all locations.

Where we remove aged, legacy displays we will use any working parts as spares to keep other displays working. We hope to be able to replace all the legacy displays within the next five years, but this is dependent on funds being available.

At this stage it is not our intention to increase the number of displays that we have, except where there is developer funding available to buy new displays. However, if we receive requests for new displays, we do keep them on record and review them considering any funds being made available.

Due to the size of our estate, we cannot maintain frequent surveillance of all our displays and therefore we rely on members of the public, and other parties, to inform us of failures and issues with the sign. Our automatic alarm system, even though it is highly effective, cannot report some data faults, visual issues, or some physical damage.

If you see a display with damage, incorrect information or not working at all, please get in touch and report it to:

Website: [www.essexhighways.org/tell-us](http://www.essexhighways.org/tell-us)

Email: [public.transport@essex.gov.uk](mailto:public.transport@essex.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0345 7430 430

Twitter: @essex\_pt

**No questions Raised:**



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### Bus user Survey

A survey is currently underway which commenced 6<sup>th</sup> March and is due to close on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. The Travel Essex unit of ECC are conducting a bus user survey to better understand public opinion of the bus services in Essex, and how we can improve bus services to encourage more people to use buses. We are looking for responses from both bus users and non-bus users. All the questions are multiple choice. The survey is completely anonymous with the first five questions asking about age, location, gender, accessibility to help us better understand the results of the survey. We would encourage you to share this survey with your communities. Please click the link to access the survey: <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/h-t/227e08fb>

### ACTIONS FOLLOWING THE MEETING:

- ECC to share copies of the slides and notes of presentations, including links.
- Stakeholder to share slides with their local Parish Councillors and contact ECC if they wish to discuss any of the topics.
- Parish Councils and Local councils to share links for the various projects on their websites, newsletters, or local meetings to raise awareness and to help their communities.
- DaRT299 – ECC to set up meeting and work with Parishes to promote new service
- ECC to update by email on outcome of July 2023 tenders.
- ECC to share details on the bus shelter project as it progresses.
- All Parish/Town/District Councils to share with their communities Bus User survey, completed by 16<sup>th</sup> April 2023 : <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/h-t/227e08fb>
- Parish/Town/District Councils to contact Wendy or Tatiana regarding meeting up to discuss ways to help promote bus services on their web sites, with their communities. Please email [passenger.Transport@essex.gov.uk](mailto:passenger.Transport@essex.gov.uk) if you are interested and we will arrange a suitable date.

## Give us Your View

We would like to hear your view on our transport meetings and information we provided to help us improve future Transport meetings.

To give us feedback, please click the link: <https://forms.office.com/e/b1kEtpZK7k>

Please note: We would like to hear from both those who attended the meeting, as well as those who were unable to attend.

Meeting closed	11.15 am
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