

Castle Point and Basildon Transport Meeting

10am Wednesday 30th 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr L. Cowles - Great Burstard Parish Council • Cllr. Gareth Talbot - Billericay Town Council • Cllr. B. Foster - Bowers Gifford Parish Council • Cllr. S. Mountford - Canvey Island Town Council • Cllr. B. Palmer - Canvey Island Town Council • Cllr. G. Isaacs - Castle Point Council • Cllr. L. McCarthy-Calvert - Castle Point Council • Martin Massey - NIBS Buses and Stephensons of Essex • Dave Aldridge - Shotgate Parish Council • Peter Thurgood - South Hanningfield Parish Council • Marie Davies - Wyvern Community Transport • Laura Gould - Canvey Island Town Council ECC/IPTU attendees representing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Bus DRT and CT Manager • Transport Officer – Travel Information • Marketing and Communication Officer
Apologies received from:	No apologies received
MEETING AGENDA POINTS AND QUESTIONS RAISED AND ANSWERED.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Welcome and Introduction Quick introduction from Wendy and welcome to everyone who were in attendance.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brief Overview on Enhanced Partnership/Bus Service Improvement Plan Presented by Enhanced Partnership Lead:	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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:</p>	
<input type="checkbox"/> An overview of local characteristics, including geography, demographics and an overview of the local transport network and policies <input type="checkbox"/> An overview of the current bus network, with consultation responses and an overview of the existing infrastructure <input type="checkbox"/> Identified issues and opportunities for improving the bus network <input type="checkbox"/> An aspirational future bus network, with proposed future interchanges and proposals including new routes and infrastructure	



Castle Point and Basildon Transport Meeting

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.
- 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 Castlepoint and Basildon 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 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 around 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

Benfleet Station – Upgrades of Real time passenger displays

Proposed plans

- Remove all current real time passenger information assets.
- Replace with a single large summary display outside the station.
- Summary display will show real time train information for passengers entering the station and real time bus information for passengers exiting the station with guidance on which stop to wait at.

*Recent upgrades in Harlow and Shenfield – (photos included in presentation slides)

Questions Raised:

Q1: As representative for a rural parish, how do we know how to identify at which stops we should place screens. Is it by volume of Buses?

A: We take a number of things into account such as the frequency of the buses, how many buses serve the bus stop and if we are able look at passenger numbers accessing the stop.

Q2: Could we have more information around the costs to install the signs.

A: We will forward this comment on to Sonya Sparks and her team, and they will contact you.



Castle Point and Basildon Transport Meeting

Q3: Cllr Isaacs said anything that can help passengers to travel is important and believe they will see a benefit. He asked if any other areas have suffered acts of vandalism/anti-social behaviour on these screens.

A: We are pleased to report that we have not yet experienced any acts of vandalism on these types of screens yet. We have, however, seen some vandalism to our smaller displays in Rochford which has meant that we have had to remove the displays completely.

Q4: How many towns and villages have these signs?

A: We have a replacement programme and will feed this information back to the team. However, we do have to consider funding and look at other pots of funding such as S106 and S278 which are both developer funding pots. Most towns and villages have the displays, but if you know of a stop which would benefit from a display, please let the Realtime team know, and they will add them to the list for future consideration.

Q5: Do we take into consideration funding opportunities and balancing the needs of suitable location for the signs?

A: We take into consideration a range of things such as frequency of the service, how many services serve the stops, number of passenger if we can get that data also the cost of course.

Q6: Will these screens show real-time?

A: Yes, they will, providing the transport providers are logged into the system. NIBS buses explained how their ticket machines are operated via GPS (as do some other operators). If this is working well then, the screens will show in count down time, if not it will revert to timetable times.

Q7: NIBS buses asked if there were plans to install similar signs in Basildon Bus Station.

A: This was fed back to the Realtime team and displays are ready to be installed into Basildon Bus Station. The installation is delayed whilst awaiting to hear from the landowner.

Local Bus contract/Team update

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 of 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. There are no contracts currently out to tender in Castlepoint and Basildon area.

Questions Raised

Q1: How does ECC check the performance of an operator?

A: ECC to provide update from contract management team with more details.

£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



Castle Point and Basildon Transport Meeting

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.

Questions Raised

Q1: Cllr. Isaacs noted that many buses still have very few passengers and thought the £2.00 single fare could be an attractor and also asked if this was available on the X10, X30 services.

A: ECC and the bus operators would appreciate your help in promoting the scheme via web sites, newsletters. The fare is offered on X10 and X30 to Stansted Airport.

Q2: On Canvey Island we have a high number of concessionary pass holders, how is that affecting transport operators return?

A: Central Government provide support to Local Authorities and Transport Providers as applicable, so that they are no better or no worse off where concessionary pass holders travel.

A: Nibs and Stephenson's of Essex confirmed they have extended the scheme for further 3 months and will continue to provide £2 single fare tickets to their customers until the end of June.

Vectare was unable to take part in government scheme because they were unable to provide baseline data for the service in October 2019, which was one of the criteria set by the Department for Transport (DfT), as they were not running services during this period. They have however, on a commercial basis offered the £2.00 cap and they have had to take a revenue hit, with no reimbursement from the DfT, but sadly they may have to withdraw some of these fares from 1st of April as they cannot afford to continue to offer discounted travel for another 3 months.

Nibs said it was disappointing that no other transport providers attended the meeting.

WJ said they were expecting First to attend the meeting as they had attended others, as have Heddinghams and Vectare.

It was noted post meeting that Wyvern Community Transport attended the meeting, and they provide transport where there is no service, or people are unable to access conventional transport – full details in the Travel Essex section and alternative travel options.

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

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



Castle Point and Basildon Transport Meeting

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 \(essexhighways.org\)](#)

No Questions Raised:

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 \(essexhighways.org\)](#)

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 Castle Point and Basildon:

- **Wyvern Community Transport**

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

[Wyvern Community Transport – Wyvern Community Transport \(wyvernct.org.uk\)](#)

- **Basildon Community Transport**

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

[Basildon Community Transport - Toenail Cutting - Wheelchair Hire \(basildoncts.co.uk\)](#)

No Questions Raised

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



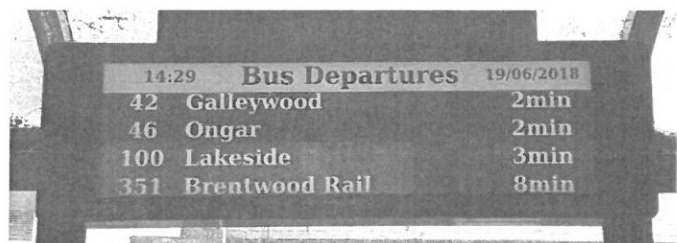
Castle Point and Basildon Transport Meeting

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

Email: public.transport@essex.gov.uk

Telephone: 0345 7430 430

Twitter: @essex_pt

Questions Raised:

Q1: We have some new planning estate coming into our areas of shortly, wondering if we can put in a request for S 106 and get a display this way. Is there any information regarding what would be costs likely to be?

A: If we are asked to comment on planning, we consider the location and whether a display is needed. In most cases we will ask for the installation of displays as part of the S106 or S278 on the planning condition. Costs vary depending on the size of the display and the installation work required to connect it.

Responses to Questions raised prior to the meeting.

We had 3 questions raised prior to the meeting:



Castle Point and Basildon Transport Meeting

Q1: How do we get quick access to bus operators when there are problems. A call to a remote call centre in Yorkshire is not the answer?

A: We understand this question relates to First Essex Buses and this was previously answered by First Bus Representative who said First Bus have only a call centre currently in Yorkshire and said they are looking to make improvements. They understand that local knowledge for local call centre is far better for everyone involved. Peter added that they do have a contact for both NIBS buses and Vectare.

Q2: How do you check performance of the service providers? Do you have a method of checking the quality of service they provide, number of passengers, delays and monitor their performance?

A: ECC expects transport providers to inform us of any subsidised journeys they do not operate for any reason if the reason for any such loss mileage is established as a fault of the transport provider, then the transport provider is obliged to reduce their invoice by calculating the proportion of journeys on that day that have not been completed and adjusting the daily rate accordingly.

The main aim would be to work with the transport provider to improve the service provided in the future, if there is any mileage lost.

It is currently a particularly difficult time for transport providers with a nationwide bus driver shortage. When there are not enough drivers, this can snowball into other pressures on the transport providers.

If you are aware of any potential lost mileage on supported ECC services, we would be grateful if you inform us of any details you have, so we can look into any such matters.

Q3: It would be helpful to have the structure of the IPTU explained with who does what?

A: If you wish to contact ECC you will see a number of links included in our notes where you can contact relevant teams in ECC. We had a major restructure, and our teams are not as big as they used to be, plus we have taken on new tasks such as the Bus Back Better Strategy/EP/BSIP. We now ask people to email passenger.transport@essex.gov.uk which is managed daily, and the email can then be sent to the relevant team to deal with. If it goes to one particular person, and they are on leave for any reason, they might get missed. This way it is not left unanswered. In addition, it enables us to identify any reoccurring issues, and try to rectify them as soon as possible.

Peter said that although they send an email to the Passenger Transport Mailbox, they still do not get a response. WJ will take this back.

Q4: There have been major problems with roadworks in Ramsden Heath/Ramsden Bellhouse and the TTRO reporting procedure between Essex Highways and the IPTU does not appear to be working as it should. Currently there is no provision for bus operators and Parish Councils to be informed of potential disruption and that has to change.

A: It is extremely difficult with not only the works on One. Network, but also emergency works that come up at the last minute too. We are aware there have been some misunderstanding with communications recently and we are collaborating with colleagues in Essex Highways to better manage these demands and are currently considering a number of options. This is with a view to improving the process as a whole, which will impact positively on passengers and bus operators, who have also experienced some difficulties themselves. As soon as we are in a position to share some of this more widely, we will do so.

NIBS buses added their concerns with the current road works systems

Q5: Cllr Mountford asked how they can get service 21 reinstated, as the changes made to the route affected Thundersley Village, so in order to re-instate the service, they approached the transport provider directly in first instance, but they have been told it is not a viable option.

A: ECC explained that ECC receive registrations from all operators and conduct an impact assessment process. Cllr. Mountford will contact IPTU to discuss current status and possibilities available for this service.



Castle Point and Basildon Transport Meeting

Bus user Survey

A survey is currently underway which commenced 6th March and is due to close on 31st 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 5 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.
- 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 16th 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 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

11.30 am

