

Title of Meeting:	Suffolk Enhanced Partnership Passenger Interest Group
Purpose or Mandate:	A collaborative approach to improving passenger transport
Date:	14 th March 2023
Place:	Teams Meeting
Time:	14:00 – 15:30
Attendees:	<p>Simon Barnett (SB) – SCC (Chair)</p> <p>Robert Kemp - SCC</p> <p>Richard Walker (RW) – Kersey Parish Council</p> <p>Mary George (MG) – Nayland & Wissington Parish Council</p> <p>Kevin Hilson (KH) – East Suffolk Travel Association</p> <p>Paul Horne (PHo) – SCC</p> <p>David Dunkley (DD) – Shimpling Parish Council</p> <p>Gerry Shrimpton (GS) – Shimpling Parish Council</p> <p>Nick Mills (NM) – Coddendam Parish Council</p> <p>Colin Butler – Lowestoft Town Council</p> <p>Peter Avis – Claydon & Whitton Parish Council</p> <p>Geoff Caryer – Grundisburgh Parish Council</p> <p>Brian Frost – Trimley St Mary Parish Council</p> <p>Anne Fleming – Halesworth Town Council</p> <p>Rachel Price (RP) – Sudbury Town Council</p> <p>Mike Williamson – Martlesham Parish Council</p> <p>Michael Newsham – Ipswich Borough Council</p> <p>Vivienne Klimowicz (VK) – Stoke by Nayland Parish Council</p> <p>James Wright (JW) – Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council</p> <p>Peter Dutton – Hadleigh Town Council</p> <p>John Dawson – Clopton Parish Council</p> <p>Tom Hatrick – Kirton & Falkenham Parish Council</p> <p>Peter Hulbert (PH) – Newmarket Town Council</p>
Apologies:	None recorded
Minute taker:	Robert Kemp

Agenda item	Description	Information/Reports/Comments
1.	EP Scheme Progress	<p>SB – had hoped that work on West End Road scheme would be happening this week but bad weather has put this back. Other schemes in design pipeline to be priced up ready for DfT if funding becomes available.</p> <p>JW – which bus routes will benefit from the West End Road scheme?</p> <p>SB – initially just the P&R although possible for Ipswich Buses and Beestons to use it in the future.</p> <p>SB – the Suffolk multi-operator ticket is still in progress. The extension of the £2 fare cap until the end of June means it makes sense to wait until this ends before introducing the ticket.</p> <p>RP – any uplift in passengers due to the £2 fare cap?</p> <p>SB – waiting on feedback from operators although there was no drop off in usage in January which is what happens traditionally. Neither was there an influx creating capacity issues.</p> <p>RP – are people not using the bus as there isn't one or is it because they're too expensive? If no significant boost to number of passengers then cost isn't the issue. Would like to hear what the operator feedback is.</p> <p>SB – this is being captured in the passenger survey.</p> <p>KH (via Teams chat) - Commercial service buses now have the £2 single cap but not for Community Transport e.g BACT operates around Bungay and Lowestoft as rural buses are few and far between. Any reason for this difference?</p> <p>PHo (via Teams chat) - the government funding is as described here £2 bus fare cap across England to save passengers money - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) local bus operators have the option to sign up</p>

		<p>MW – has had two requests from constituents in Martlesham regarding Black Tiles Lane. First removed the service from there meaning a 30 minute walk to the nearest stop. Complaint regarding the 1005 66A service which hasn't arrived for the 3rd time in two weeks. The response from First was that it was due to driver shortages.</p> <p>SB – still a national driver shortage which is a long term problem. Changing drivers duties at short notice could affect the entire days service, particularly if duties have already begun. As this is a commercial service there is only so much we can do. Let us know of on-going issues and we can follow up with them at our regular meetings.</p> <p>MW – the service being re-instated through Martlesham Street would be the first thing to do to improve the service.</p> <p>VK – endorse what has been said. There is only one bus to Sudbury which doesn't come back. Happy to evidence this and send through. As SCC were unable to increase the service went direct to Gavin Smith (CEO) and they now have an extra bus through Stoke by Nayland and Nayland although still need a bus to Colchester.</p> <p>SB – we will raise with them but have no budget to fund anything extra to help.</p> <p>MG (via Teams chat) - Nayland with Wissington asked to be involved in any service review but unfortunately it didn't happen.</p>
2.	Future structure of group	<p>SB – have previously spoken about meeting in person and with operators too.</p> <p>PH – would like to meet operators as nothing better than face to face.</p> <p>KH (via Teams chat) - As regards inviting bus operators in a face to face meeting, ESTA has often tried but without much success.</p> <p>SB – the EP is coming up to its first birthday which the authority has been happy to carry the weight of however moving forward would anyone be willing to volunteer to arrange meetings/take minutes etc? Please let us know.</p>
3.	Forum Questions	<p>GS – they also have one bus a week – how do you go about getting more?</p>

		<p>SB – initially approach the bus companies as routes operate commercially. SCC have a limited budget to fill the gaps. Lobby Councillors to increase the local bus service budget. £80 – 100k per year for a bus service. SCC has budget of approximately £1m + £600k from central Government which is used for 26 services across the county. Can't currently provide anything new without withdrawing from somewhere else.</p> <p>GS – there are 13 buses in either direction but only one diverts a mile off route to serve Shimpling.</p> <p>SB – need to speak to the operator. Happy to help pull things together between the Parish and operator.</p> <p>VK – need a large evidence base. Held a public meeting, copied in County Councillors, District Councillors and local MP.</p> <p>DD – concessionary cards are not being recorded. Operators are not going to know numbers even if it's funded differently.</p> <p>SB – only First and Ipswich Buses are on a fixed payment. 99% of concessionary numbers are recorded. SCC still paying pre-covid reimbursements to operators for 2023/24.</p> <p>JW – with concessionary fares operators don't get the full fare.</p> <p>SB – there is a generation factor. Operators should be no better or no worse off and receive approx. a third/a half of the full fare with the view that this will increase usage.</p> <p>KH – rural areas in Lowestoft are not served well at all. Found Community Transport provides reasonable alternatives. Perhaps Parish Councils could look at this if there are a number of people that need it.</p> <p>SB – issue with Community Transport is the number of single occupancy journeys. Keen to pursue group bookings. Hollesley now served by CATS on a regular pre-booked timetables service (trial basis).</p> <p>PH – Community Transport doesn't operate Saturdays/Sundays.</p> <p>SB – they should operate Monday – Saturday and would want to know why they're not. TVN have paid drivers but elsewhere they're volunteers. Would want to put in</p>
--	--	---

		<p>Sunday operation in new contracts but only if SCC can afford to pay for it.</p> <p>PH – number of buses or trains on race days in Newmarket or on Newmarket nights isn't sufficient. Enough trade to make operators want to run something on these days/nights?</p> <p>RW – made good use of £2 fare. Any plans to extend?</p> <p>SB – not aware of any although April was the original end date prior to it being extended to June.</p> <p>RW – Community Transport in Kersey can only be called 0900 – 1500. Any way of digitising this?</p> <p>SB – with the new contracts looking at one booking number for Suffolk and app bookings. App costs for the Katch service were £200k upfront plus £1k p/year. East Suffolk Council are looking to develop an app themselves and make it available to Community Transport.</p> <p>KH (via Teams chat) - are there any Community Transport schemes in the South of Suffolk?</p> <p>PHo (via Teams chat) - connecting communities cover all of Suffolk Connecting Communities (suffolkonboard.com)</p> <p>KH – which other rural counties are shining examples of Community Transport working well?</p> <p>SB – Lincolnshire are doing good things. Transport East are the sub-national lead on rural transport.</p> <p>PHo (via Teams chat) - https://www.transporteast.org.uk/rural-transport/</p> <p>VK – Community Transport was investigated when they were losing their service but were told they only go 8 miles out. With the new contracts how are you going to ensure coverage?</p> <p>SB – they are obliged to cover the area. In the new contract everyone will have coverage and operators will be penalised if they don't provide it.</p> <p>VK – what about the social need, demographic. How is that measured?</p> <p>PHo – Transport East are looking at the social value.</p>
--	--	--

		<p>NM – they have the 116 service between Debenham and Ipswich but a Community Transport scheme to Needham Market and Stowmarket would be helpful. Commercial and CT operators working together.</p> <p>SB – Connecting Communities should be used for this to connect from door to mainline services and bus stops. In the BSIP there is the idea of a mobility hub to make connections more attractive. It hasn't happened as much as we would like.</p> <p>KH – could the Parish Councils co-ordinate for residents?</p> <p>SB – if anyone would like to talk off-line about this, happy to do so.</p> <p>RP (via Teams chat) - Could the Rural Prosperity Fund be drawn upon for subsidising community transport to connect villages with from connectivity to their closest market towns? https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus/rural-england-prosperity-fund-prospectus</p>
4.	Date of next meeting	9 th May 2023