

Title of Meeting:	Suffolk Enhanced Partnership Passenger Interest Group Meeting
Purpose or Mandate:	A collaborative approach to improving passenger transport
Date:	9 th January 2024
Place:	Teams Meeting
Time:	1400 - 1530
Attendees:	<p>Simon Barnett -Chair (SB) – SCC Emma Forde (EF) – SCC Paul Horne (PH) – SCC Richard Walker (RW) – Kersey Parish Council Peter Dow (PD) – Elmswell Parish Council Wendy Brame - Hadleigh Town Council Cllr Chris Carter (CC) – Kentford Parish Council Ben Walsh (BW) – Mid Anglia Rail Passengers Association Joan Price (JP) – North Cove Parish Council John Sillett – Lowestoft Town Council Tom Hatrick – Kirton & Falkenham Parish Council Liz D’Arville – Trimley St Martin Parish Council Michael Newsham – Ipswich Borough Council Kevin Hilson - ESTA Vicky Waples – Thurston Parish Council Rhys Jarvis (RJ) – Southwold Parish Council Neil Winstanley – Norton Parish Council Graeme Mateer – SCC Rachel Price (RP) – Sudbury Town Council Toni Wisbey (TW) – Stradbroke Parish Council Doreen Pegg – Woodbridge Town Council Tony Warren – Suffolk Chamber of Commerce Gerry Shrimpton – Elmswell Parish Council John Harvey Peter Hulbert – Newmarket Town Council Cllr Seamus Bennett (CSB) – SCC John Bann (JB) – Melton Parish Council</p>
Apologies:	<p>Yvonne Smart – Trimley St Mary Parish Council Gerald Howarth – Chelsworth Parish Council Rachel Green – Otley Parish Council Alan Braithwaite – Monks Eleigh Parish Council James Wright – Rushmere St Andrew Parish Council</p>
Minute taker:	Robert Kemp

Agenda item	Description	Information/Reports/Comments
1.	BSIP+ funding – scheme update	<p>SB – still going through the assessment process. Good response as 64 schemes submitted by Parish Councils, operators and others covering all of Suffolk. These range from extending existing services to starting new ones and fare initiatives. Our budget is protected through the EP.</p> <p>EF – the breadth of suggestions has been very welcome. The number of schemes submitted helps us with our case for more funding. We are of course oversubscribed so some of them will not get through the first round for delivery. Some may also not meet the criteria so may get through via other funding sources. Still evaluating but hope to get some up and running asap.</p> <p>SB – for schemes that can't be funded this time we will go back to the applicant. Will also send these schemes to operators for them to consider on their own commercial services should they wish to carry forward without any funding. Action will be taken on what people want and where.</p> <p>The cut off date for submissions was 20th December. The formal process will not start again until after 1st April when we know about year 2 funding but we're always open to seeing ideas/options before then.</p> <p>Any questions on the application process?</p> <p>CC – how do Parish Councils gather evidence needed on passengers? Lots say they want a service but don't use it.</p> <p>SB – some Parish Councils have done surveys/questionnaires. Feedback we've had in areas where services are wanted.</p> <p>RW – would like to do more with other Parish Councils in the area for DRT services in south Babergh.</p> <p>SB – where we've had similar ideas from neighbouring Parish Councils we've put them in touch with each other.</p> <p>TW – getting evidence before the bus route has started doesn't tell you how many will use it. No bus to Framlingham other than early morning and back late afternoon. Could provide a lot of trade to Framlingham. Word of mouth starts when services are up and running. Need to know what others are doing nearby.</p> <p>SB – all schemes submitted will be published on Suffolk on Board. Neighbouring Parish Councils are already being linked together. Have previously done roadshows throughout Suffolk to meet people and see what they want.</p> <p>EF – the fundamental part of the funding allocation will be who's going to use them.</p>

		<p>CC – it’s chicken and egg. Stagecoach have evidence but say it’s commercially sensitive.</p> <p>SB – we’re looking at a questionnaire for everyone to use. Working part of the wider Enhanced Partnership to get data and make it more widely available.</p> <p>RJ – it doesn’t feel like a real partnership with operators as they’re in it for profit. Need engagement with them to see where they can operate journeys to get a profit.</p> <p>BW (via Teams chat) - I think the '£2 Cap' works very well....I am not saying it is enough, but I think it is a good start!</p> <p>CSB (via Teams chat) – The idea that bus use ‘since Covid’ is inevitably (and forevermore) down is not the case - numerous places (in UK & abroad) are seeing increased public transport / bus use - where services are reliable, high quality and good value. (This often coincides with where they are not run for private profit.)</p> <p>EF – it should be recognised that some operators are really on board with the partnership. It is always a challenge of commercial data and sharing.</p> <p>Population stats for Parishes might be helpful to form a baseline of possible passenger information. Cost per mile to run a service is available from DfT - https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus-statistics-data-tables#costs-fares-and-revenue-bus04 so you can calculate how much it would cost to run the service you want.</p> <p>Anything we can’t fund will be shared to see if ideas can be taken forward in another way by operators.</p> <p>PH (via Teams chat) - The Suffolk Observatory provides useful data by ward https://www.suffolkobservatory.info/population/reports/#/view-report/0e80000fe3664109b42bc3010a02ab7c/E05012763/G7</p> <p>TW – with Parishes on the boarder there are services funded by Norfolk that are coming into Suffolk as they’ve got nothing as services have been cut. Borderhopper services are very popular and full of passengers.</p> <p>CC (via Teams chat) - Hear, Hear Toni re cutting existing services. Kentford folk want to go from Suffolk to and from Cambridge!</p> <p>SB – some service cuts were due to accessibility requirements for bus services and were those run using a coach which didn’t meet the requirements. Operators didn’t have the money to convert these vehicles or buy new ones. Section 22 services operated by CT were restricted by the mileage they could operate.</p>
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2.	Bus Stops & Shelters	<p>SB – had bids in for stops and shelters. Funding is for service provision not capital purchases. Could look at converting money or use other funding sources. Where new stops are required we could look at moving existing ones.</p>
3.	Community Transport in Suffolk	<p>SB – we received some BSIP bid for general service improvements some which could already be achieved by Community Transport. Promotion is not working as people don't realise it's there. Everyone has access to them. 7 contracts covering general District Council boundaries. Information can be found here - https://communities.suffolkonboard.com/</p> <p>RW – have had difficulty communicating with CT as can't get hold of them. 9 – 3 Mon to Friday only and not at weekends.</p> <p>SB – trying to get them to increase their booking hours. The new contract start in April and expecting more from them. Ideas of what works, what doesn't. Looking at online booking or an app.</p> <p>CC – commercial vs CT. Kentford parishioners get a free bus pass but it's £6 on CT.</p> <p>SB – ENCTS is a government initiative for local bus services for which operators get reimbursed. The amount is currently around £7m for Suffolk. Anything above the statutory requirement ie to cover CT would have to come out of SCC budget.</p> <p>TW – free bus passes are very useful as it helps with peoples mental health to be able to get out.</p> <p>JP – funding is available for mental health. Parishes could apply to help fund buses – (details below sent following the meeting. This funding is from East Suffolk, with applications closing 29.1.24)</p> <p>Voluntary organisations and community groups in Beccles, Bungay and Halesworth are invited to apply for funding to support projects helping to ease social isolation and boost wellbeing.</p>

		<p>Organisations can apply for between £250 and £2,000 from a total fund of £10,000 for a range of projects, providing they support individuals and families to tackle social isolation and loneliness, and/or enable people to live healthier, active and sustainable lifestyles.</p> <p>Full details about eligibility criteria and how to apply are available at eastsuffolk.co/bbh</p> <p>SB – a successful pilot has been up and running in Elmswell and surrounding parishes.</p> <p>PD – this was set up because the old model of the diesel bus travelling around villages has to go. It needs to be more localised and flexible. Need to get away from profit and consultation data and start again.</p> <p>RJ – there is evidence to support PD. Hackney Community Transport focused on operating through communities. They took on a partnering arrangement in the Channel Islands which worked very well. In Suffolk it can run with community services outside the main towns.</p> <p>JP – older people don't have mobiles and can't use an app.</p> <p>SB – phone lines would still be available.</p> <p>TW – we need to look ahead and with climate change we need to get more people on buses. It can be impossible to use the bus as it's either not there or is infrequent. Young people won't use them as seen as being used by old people and also are not available in the evenings.</p> <p>SB – we now have an EP Marketing Manager who will be looking at all of this. We recently attended the Suffolk Young Persons networking event and do have the Endeavour Card. The Katch pilot showed patronage was split more towards young persons using it due to the way it was marketed.</p>
4.	General Questions/Future Topics	<p>SB – would like to look at disabled access and where you can't get on/off buses etc.</p> <p>RP – would like to understand how SCC works with other transport authorities. Also look at onward travel.</p> <p>SB – our Passenger Charter was set up and is the same as in Norfolk and Essex. The respective heads of transport meet regularly. We also have a Community Rail Partnership officer linking with Greater Anglia.</p> <p>JP – North Cove has no stops on the A146. Sometimes the bus doesn't go through North Cove if it's running late.</p>

		<p>SB – operators are supposed to do what’s on the timetable. Record times/dates this happens so it can be reported.</p> <p>TW – Parish Councils need to know who deals with what and who to contact.</p> <p>JB – look at how to get information when buses are diverted. Not everyone has access to social media.</p> <p>SB – Network Assurance (Suffolk Highways) deal with road closures/works. Our BSS team relay all information to operators and update RTPi where appropriate.</p> <p>SB – send in ideas for future topics. Looking at getting in guest speakers including operators to talk about what they do and how they make their decisions on services etc.</p>
5.	AOB	None
6.	Date of Next Meeting	14 th March 2024