

# **SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL**

## **Southend on Sea Local Bus Forum Second Meeting**

**Date: Thursday, 5th September, 2024**  
**Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite**

**Present:** Councillor P Collins (Chair)  
Southend-on-Sea City Council: Councillor Anne Jones  
Southend-on-Sea City Council: Councillor Kevin Buck  
Southend-on-Sea City Council: Councillor Daniel Cowan (Non-voting)  
Arriva: Michael Jennings  
First Essex: Julian Elliott (attending remotely)  
Stephensons of Essex: Bill Hiron  
SABUG (Southend Area Bus User Group): Stephen Knightley  
CBT (Campaign for Better Transport): Silvya Barrett  
Secretariat: John Austin, Conor Jones

**The meeting's format was Hybrid:  
one Member attended remotely**

### **1 Apologies for Absence, and Statement of Quoracy**

Apologies for absence: H Morris (Essex County Council), D Kudla (Rochford District Council), M Hennessy (Castle Point Borough Council), S Gloyne (Southend BID), Insp. J Childs (Essex Police), J Martin (Bus Users UK), and M Bartram (Transport Focus)

The meeting was deemed to be Quorate as present were the Chair, over 50% of the City Council representatives, over 50% of the Bus Operator representatives, and one representative of the other member organisations.

### **2 Confirmation of Minutes of the last meeting of the Forum**

The Minutes of the meeting on 4th September 2023 were confirmed as accurate.

### **3 Local Bus Forum overview**

The role of the Local Bus Forum within the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme was explained.

### **4 Members of the Public's Submitted Questions or Comments on the Agenda Items**

A number of questions had been submitted in advance by members of the public (including Councillors who were not members of the Local Bus Forum), according to the procedure detailed in the section of the [democracy.southend.gov.uk](https://democracy.southend.gov.uk) website covering the Southend Local Bus Forum. These related largely to concerns regarding bus services in specific areas of the City, and were responded to by the Operators and / or representatives of the Council, as appropriate. The submitted questions were read out by the questioner where he / she was in attendance at

the meeting, and by the Secretariat where the questioner was unable to be there in person. The questions and responses are posted as an Annex to these Minutes.

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**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**5 Overview of Expenditure Plans for BSIP Phase 2 Funds**

The approach behind the allocation of expenditure awarded to the Council was explained under the four main headings shown in the Agenda.

**6 Strategic Direction of Enhanced Partnership**

The discussion around the seven key objectives of the Bus Service Improvement Plan confirmed that these objectives continue to apply in the Enhanced Partnership. The refreshed BSIP (to be published on the Democracy website, alongside these Minutes) repeats these objectives and mentions identification and resolution of gaps in the network: these were discussed in the Forum. It was confirmed that the planned review of the network included as part of the BSIP provides evidence that the EP approach covers this.

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**ITEMS FOR DECISION**

**7 Recommendations on Proposed Variations to Enhanced Partnership Scheme**

The Recommendations on the Proposed Variations to the Enhanced Partnership Scheme were accepted with the following exceptions:

- All the four proposed October 2024 deliverables be changed to December 2024, as it was considered that October 2024 was too optimistic.
- The identification of options to promote value fares for the summer be advanced to May 2025 to allow adequate preparation before implementation of the value fares.

This and the previous item of these Minutes will become the Report submitted to the Local Bus Board as the Local Bus Forum's guidance on the direction of the Enhanced Partnership.

**8 Nomination of and voting on candidates for Chair of Local Bus Board**

The meeting noted that Jennie Martin MBE, Chair of Bus Users UK, the existing Chair of the Local Bus Board (who was unable to attend today's meeting of the Forum) offered herself as candidate for election as Chair of the Southend Local Bus Board for the next 12 months. The Forum noted that the members of the Southend Local Bus Board supported her continuation as Chair of the Local Bus Board. No nominations for other candidates for Chair of the Board had been received by the Secretariat.

The proposal for Jennie Martin to be elected as Chair of the Local Bus Board for the next 12 months was formally made by Southend-on-Sea City Council, a vote took place and she was elected unanimously.

**9 Nomination of and voting on any additional representatives from other groups to join the Forum as members**

Southend-on-Sea City Council proposed that the Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust be invited to join the Local Bus Forum as a Member for future meetings. This proposal was voted on and received unanimous approval.

It was also suggested by Southend-on-Sea City Council that the Southend Youth Council might be invited to comment on the Agenda items of future Forum meetings, although having the Youth Council as a Forum member is impractical because of the inability of a Youth Council's representative to attend at the time of day that the Forum would normally meet. This suggestion was noted and it was agreed to be actioned.

**10 Date of next Annual Meeting of Southend Local Bus Forum**

This will be agreed at a later date but will be at some point in September 2025.

**Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **ANNEX:**

### **Questions previously submitted by Members of the Public, and responses given**

#### **1. Bus service to Central Avenue / North Avenue**

“Since Stephenson's bus company changed the route of the number 24 bus service, there has been no bus serving Central/North Avenue. This was a well-established route which ran for many years and is sorely missed.

“Why can't the number 24 bus leave the city travel centre and follow the old route along Central Avenue to Archer Avenue. It could then return to the travel centre along the new route of Hamstel Road, Lifestan Way and Woodgrange Drive. This would give both communities a six-day per week bus service which would be a great benefit to the residents of the Central Avenue area of Southchurch and should not result in any extra expense as it is just a matter of an alteration of an existing route and not a request for a completely new route.”

#### **Answer:**

The Council is currently working on a proposal with Stephenson's to provide a replacement service from the end of October, between the City Centre and Central Avenue, broadly hourly on Mondays to Fridays.

#### **2. Bus Service to Shoeburyness**

a) “Since the end of July, residents living between East Beach in Shoeburyness and Shoebury ASDA, have been adversely affected by the reduction in the number 9 service from 4 an hour to two an hour, on this section of the route. This is the latest of numerous transport cuts to this part of Shoeburyness over many years, where we have lost the Arriva bus Numbers 8,9 and 1 leaving us with the number 9 and the Stephenson's number 14 which serves Gt Wakering and is approximately 90 minutes frequency between 9.42 and 17.10.

“A petition by concerned residents now has 412 online and 45 paper signatures, highlighting the injustice of this situation and requesting that the deleted buses be reinstated. Many residents have contacted the East Beach Resident's Association about the adverse impact of this change; bearing in mind we have a large number of older and disabled residents in this area and others are very worried about how this will impact on their ability to get their children to school on time.

“It is disappointing to hear that the government funding intended to improve bus services through the Bus Service Improvement Plan was not discussed with our local bus users forum and many residents do feel that the data used to make the decision regarding the number 9 service was flawed.

“Can the Southend on Sea Local Bus Forum please provide some reassurance that they will review this decision by Arriva and potentially challenge this on behalf of the residents of Shoeburyness. Could the Forum also advise what steps residents can take to ensure that they do not become any further isolated and cut off from essential services in the light of the cuts in service?”

b) "Shoeburyness is an area with a high population of older or disabled residents. Access to our local hospital is therefore essential but made extremely difficult by the reduction in the number 9 service and the need to change buses en route "The option would be to extend the 7 service from the Renown to East Beach. As a stop over point this is much better for drivers as there is access to toilets and other facilities."

**Answer:**

The operator replied that the current service level to East Beach is commensurate with the existing demand and that the timetable allows recovery time at East Beach with the aim of improving reliability. While it is appreciated that direct links to the Hospital are wanted there is not enough regular demand for such a link to justify that commercially.

**3. Hamlet Court Road**

"This question is linked to a number of queries I have had from residents living around the Hamlet Court area. There are bus bays marked out in Hamlet Court Road, which are rarely used. Are there any plans to reintroduce a bus service that goes down Hamlet Court Road?"

**Answer:**

There are no plans to reintroduce commercial bus services to Hamlet Court Road as it has been attempted in the past without success, and since then Covid has led to demand falling. Discussions can take place with Essex CC to see whether there any feasibilities or possibilities for the diversion of the 3 via Hamlet Court Road between the City Centre and the Hospital.

**4. Highlands Boulevard.**

"I would like to make a request to have some buses diverted to cover the area along Highlands Boulevard from the London Road to Woodfield Road and back to the London Road.

"You may know that this route existed previously and in fact the bus stops are still available to use.

"There are only dwellings in this area and the people concerned, from school children to pensioners, would be greatly assisted in their mobility if the service could be reinstated and the 'greenness' of the area would be improved because using buses is of course so much better than individuals using cars."

**Answer:**

Again, like Hamlet Court Road, the relative proximity of the area to the well-served London Road makes it difficult to generate enough demand from this area, and as a result there currently no plans for commercial bus services there.

## **5. Environmentally-friendly bus fleets**

"With the climate crisis very evident across the world, please could the bus operators explain any plans to make their fleets the most environmentally friendly and a timeline to do so?"

### **Answer:**

The operators explained their plans regarding electric buses, in the context of the life of a bus being around 16 years which means that the replacement of bus fleets takes a long time. A significant challenge is that electric buses are currently around twice the price of Euro 6 diesel vehicles, which are the most modern diesel buses. The cost of connecting bus depots to the trunk electricity distribution network is also very significant, particularly for operators with a large number of small depots.

First is at the forefront of electrifying nationally and is aiming for a zero carbon fleet by 2035: however, there are significant challenges regarding battery range. The Southend - Basildon 25 service will be electrified as part of Essex's recent successful ZEBRA 2 bid.

It was remarked that the best way of reducing carbon emissions is to get more people out of cars and onto buses, and that bus fleet electrification was only one action within a wider package of possible measures.

## **6. Better Buses Bill**

"The government are currently working on The Better Buses Bill that gives a window of opportunity to improve services that work for our communities.

"There are areas in which the only way to provide a much needed bus service is for it to be run on a not for profit basis. Please could the councillors representing the administration let us know how they are involved in supporting publicly owned bus companies at councils."

### **Answer:**

Once the exact content and details of the Better Buses Bill are clear the Council will examine the options available to it, recognising that not all the options available will necessarily be appropriate for the particular situation of Southend.

## **7. Chichester Road bus stop**

"Can the bus stop in the bus bay on the northbound carriageway (opposite Warrior Square) at Chichester Road, Southend on Sea, be increased from a single bus stop to two, or three stops."

### **Answer:**

The Council is examining this and will inform SABUG of developments.