



**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE**

**Date: Tuesday, 10 October 2023**

**Time: 6.00pm,**

**Location: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage**

**Contact: Abbie Hamilton (01438) 242587**

**committees@stevenage.gov.uk**

Members: Councillors: R Broom (Chair), A Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), J Brown, B Facey, C McGrath, A McGuinness, S Mead, C Parris, E Plater, G Snell and Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, OBE

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**AGENDA**

**PART 1**

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**2. MINUTES - MONDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2023**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 4 September 2023.

Pages 3 – 10

**3. INTERVIEW WITH HERTS VISION LOSS CHARITY AND STEVENAGE IRISH NETWORK FOR OLDER PEOPLE**

Members are invited to receive the written response from Herts Vision Loss client base and the Stevenage Irish Network's older members regarding bus use in Stevenage and interview representatives from both organisations.

Pages 11 – 14

**4. INTERVIEW WITH SBC EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMY & TRANSPORT**

To interview the Executive Portfolio Holder for Economy & Transport regarding SBC holding HCC and the bus operator service providers to account.

Pages 15 – 16

**5. INTERVIEW WITH PLANNING POLICY AND CLIMATE CHANGE OFFICERS REGARDING BUS SERVICES**

Interview with the Planning Policy and Climate Change Officers regarding related issues with sustainable bus travel.

**6. UPDATED MAPPING DOCUMENT FOR BUS SCRUTINY REVIEW & FEEDBACK FROM MEMBER SITE VISIT TO POTTERS BAR GARAGE ELECTRIC BUS**

To consider the updated mapping document dated 10 October 2023 and to receive the notes of the Member site visit to the Potters Bar Metroline Bus Garage to see TFL electric buses and interview the Garage Manager.

Pages 17 – 26

**7. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

**8. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

**9. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

## STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 4 September 2023

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber, Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage

**Present:** Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Adam Mitchell CC (Vice-Chair), Jim Brown, Bret Facey, Conor McGrath, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater and Graham Snell.

**Start / End Time:** Start Time: 6.00pm  
End Time: 7.41pm

#### 1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received by Cllr Andy McGuinness and Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, OBE

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2 **MINUTES - THURSDAY 6 JULY 2023**

It was **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 6 July 2023 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### 3 **INTERVIEW WITH ARRIVA BUS COMPANY**

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Michael Jennings, Area Head of Commercial for Arriva South, and Alec Bright, Arriva Network Manager for Stevenage.

The Chair asked a range of questions which were answered by Mr Jennings and included:

- Mr Jennings agreed that electric buses were the future.
- The main reasons why Arriva withdrew from the ZEBRA scheme were the impact of Covid and the financial implications from it. During Covid bus patronage reduced by three quarters and it was decided that Arriva couldn't invest into Stevenage. Instead they did invest into a new depot.
- Unfortunately there was no option to delay the government grant, as it was a take it or leave it offer and at the time during Covid it was not financially viable to invest into Stevenage. He hoped that another government grant would be available.
- He highlighted that they needed more support and needed to replace a large portion of the fleet which would require a lot of large capital investment at once.
- The ZEBRA bid was quick in becoming available and needed to be submitted

- quickly with awards being made on a large scale to small areas.
- Arriva had introduced electric buses in Leicester and London, but there were no electric fleets currently in the Southeast.
  - He acknowledged that there was a problem with the current service and delivery was below where it should be. He highlighted some causes for this.
  - Staffing had been a big issue not only in Stevenage but across Hertfordshire. They were now fully staffed in Stevenage and had increased pay rates to £16 per hour. They had also increased starter rates and used agencies to fill any gaps in staffing.
  - The depot site had been another issue. Previously they had been operating from two sites which was difficult to manage. Now they are operating from one site with the correct facilities.
  - Another issue had been engineering which they were still having issues with. The current fleet was older, they had issues with getting engineering staff, and there was a lack of parts which took time to come in. He highlighted that they had an action plan which still had some way to go but they were moving forward in the right direction.

A Member asked a question regarding the average percentage of services operated and suggested this was not in line with the public perception of what had been operated. Mr Jennings agreed that the perception was negative, but it was often worse than what was operated. The impact from traffic, lack of drivers, and issues with engineering all contribute to late services and although some services were late, they still ran. He stated that ideally, they wanted to run at least 99% of services.

A Member asked a question regarding the monthly data that had been provided. Mr Jennings advised that the variations in the monthly data was affected by various factors such as school holidays, bank holidays, or how many weekends there were in a certain month.

Another Member asked why there were recruitment issues. Mr Jennings advised that there had been a challenge with drivers and engineers and had been seen across the entire bus sector not just Arriva and there were lots of reasons for this. Covid had a significant impact on this due to lifestyle changes, delayed operations, and the market changing. Brexit was also another issue as they cannot recruit from overseas anymore. They had made the job more attractive by investing in the depot and facilities, changing schedules and increasing pay rates.

A few Members asked questions about the communications through the website, app and twitter, as well as the real time information infrastructure. Mr Jennings advised that the website was good at showing the timetable, but there was a challenge in showing what was actually operating. The app gave live updates and showed what was operating but there were still limitations. Some last-minute changes aren't updated as quick. The Department for Transport had pushed for open data so other websites can access and track the data and show real time information. The real time information infrastructure was down to Hertfordshire County Council. Mr Bright also added that they had a red list of journeys that should operate daily and would take priority, for example the first or last journeys of the day.

Some Members asked questions in relation to operations in other areas such as London or Leicester. Mr Jennings advised that having electric buses in London was slightly different as Transport for London pay to operate services. Leicester also had a different market and was stronger therefore was also a good candidate for an electric fleet. Stevenage pre-covid had a strong market but it had decreased post-covid. It was also currently hard to gain investments and the business wouldn't be sustainable if an electric fleet was introduced into Stevenage. In terms of general performance there had been a mixed picture nationally and there were only a few areas which showed excellent performance. There have been major lifestyle changes in recent years, such as working from home, which changed how many people used the service. Mr Jennings didn't think bus usage would return to pre-covid levels and this was a national issue.

A few Members asked questions regarding the aging fleet in Stevenage and the use of biodiesel. Mr Jennings advised that electric vehicles were a lot more expensive and wouldn't replace diesel vehicles like for like. The biggest challenge was missed funding opportunities during covid and without funding they were more likely to get more diesel vehicles, but they already use biodiesel. They were looking nationally at what they can do to bring buses in as there was a link between the age of buses and their environmental impact. The oldest vehicle running in Stevenage was 14 years old (with two 19-year-old buses just taken out the fleet) and the average age of the fleet was 12.5 years with vehicles ranging between 9-14 years. Mr Bright added that if any investment opportunities did come towards Hertfordshire, it would come towards Stevenage. This was due to the age of the fleet as well as the potential in Stevenage.

A Member asked whether there had been an effect from the £2 fare cap. Mr Jennings advised that this had increased patronage by a small amount, and they had seen the most use from longer journeys.

A few Members asked questions regarding the practicality of electric buses within Stevenage, and it was advised:

- There were pinch points, and the biggest challenge was getting buses moving faster.
- Haycroft Road was a tight road where buses had issues, as well as roads such as Chertsey Rise were not designed for buses but remained as they were strong routes.
- Main roads and dual carriageways were good.
- There weren't problems all day, but certain areas at certain times.
- Parking was also an issue.
- They try to get buses into new developments and communicate with the developers and local councils.
- The issue with new developments was that most people who buy houses in new developments have cars and don't use buses.
- The key to new developments was to build them with buses in mind, for example no speed bumps or wider roads.
- Some developments have tight turns that make it difficult for buses to travel

the route. Ideally providing buses through Section 106 and having developments account for buses help.

- The depot was built in mind with electric vehicle charging. Ideally the buses would be charged overnight and topped up during the day.
- An electric bus can travel 180-200 miles on one charge but won't last all day.
- They could opportunity charge and charge at the end of the route.
- Technology needs to improve so bus batteries can last all day.

A Member asked what local authorities could do to make it easier for commercial providers to provide local services. Mr Jennings advised that as a commercial operator it was key to react and address quickly. Issues arise when there was a problem they cannot address, local authorities are slow to react. He also added that town vitality was key. Stevenage needs to be an attractive destination for a variety of people such as employers and shoppers. Mr Bright added that Stevenage had always been pro-bus and was one of the best towns for buses in Hertfordshire. However, it was getting harder with traffic and most households owning cars.

A Member suggested that cutting fares and increasing service would make more people use buses. Mr Jennings advised that if they increased frequency they would carry more, and if they reduced fares they would carry more. However, if they doubled the frequency, they wouldn't carry double the passengers, but it would still cost double to run.

A Member asked questions regarding the accessibility of the bus service. Mr Jennings advised that the entire fleet was fully wheelchair accessible, and some bus stops are. The next step was to make all bus stops accessible but that was down to Hertfordshire County Council. Operators are doing things locally to see what accessibility looks like and this was needed from the Department for Transport. All destination screens were electronic, and the next step was to add announcements for next stops. The Scrutiny Officer also added that they had feedback from a Hertfordshire group who work with people who are visually impaired. They raised issues around how they view boards, etc. Mr Jennings added that more work needed to be done but they had done things over the years to help understand different issues, such as guide dogs.

The Chair thanked Mr Jennings and Mr Bright for their contribution to the meeting.

#### 4 **INTERVIEW WITH BUS USER GROUP STEVENAGE (BUGS)**

The Chair welcomed to the meeting David Martin, Secretary of the Bus User Group Stevenage (BUGS).

The Chair invited Mr Martin to give an overview of the BUGS perception of the bus service across the years which included:

- The issues the bus service experienced in 2017 are not different to the issues experienced today.
- The Bus Service Act enhanced the partnership between Local Councils, County Councils, and operators. The interlink partnership was there before

but had no real power with the County Council.

- Lots of issues affect the service such as lack of drivers, seasonal changes, or holidays during the summer.
- The graphs provided from Arriva show operations from Stevenage depot, which included other longer routes out of Stevenage and generally run well. The graphs didn't represent the shorter Stevenage services and didn't reflect the complaints from residents about the local bus service.
- The open data allowed anyone to look at specific services.
- There were lots of services being dropped and the real time information wasn't available to let people know it had been cancelled.

Some Members asked questions in relation to the bus times and scheduling. Mr Martin advised that operators had to register their services with the County Council, and it took, on average, 6 weeks to implement changes. The County Council tends to rely on commercial operators to give information about which routes they want to run, although they do have some control. For example, the SB8 route had been withdrawn, but Arriva ran an evening service under contract with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC).

A Member asked how often operators consult groups within Hertfordshire. Mr Martin advised that they generally didn't. BUGs were consulted once by HCC once to develop passenger charter and bus service user plan. They didn't consult on routes and services and any changes that have happened were through grassroots campaigns, For example in Hertsmere a community investment levy fund was used to restore the bus service.

Some Members asked questions relating to the data not comparing to the experience of local passengers, as well as app usage. Mr Martin advised that passengers would rather services that came. There were many issues such as buses breaking down when they overheat, or Arriva having to take on other services and routes which created more issues with lack of drivers. The Arriva app only looks at Arriva services and was useful to see the service generally however isn't always accurate. There needed to be a multi operator zone ticket to improve service use.

A Member asked whether the improved depot would make a difference to the service and the issues it had. Mr Martin advised that the staff moral had improved with the new depot. The operations would also be better as there was an improvement in the communications and awareness.

A Member asked questions relating to the accessibility of the service. Mr Martin advised that accessibility was improving. All buses were required to have wheelchair access as a minimum. He added that the government had specified new regulations that buses would have audio and visual announcements for the next stop, as well as wheelchair users being able to see stop information. All new vehicles from November would have this built in and older vehicles would have this retrofitted.

A Member asked whether competition could help the service improve. Mr Martin advised that other bus operators did not travel on the same routes. He added that residents were interested to see other operations as they have negative perceptions

and experiences with Arriva. During Covid, Centrebus couldn't manage but worked to capacity unlike Arriva so had a more positive public perception.

Some Members asked whether the interchange had improved the service use and was working efficiently. Mr Martin advised that the interchange was working reasonably well. There were some late buses going into incorrect bays which caused issues, but this was being resolved. The real time information was the real issue and HCC were working on a new display system that would give better information. The original plans for the interchange included a mobility centre however due to Covid and the lack of funding and budgets, the space was leased to a shop. This worked well but the lack of a mobility centre was a disappointment. Mobility issues had reduced the numbers of elderly passengers, as well as Covid.

A Member asked whether bus drivers received abuse from passengers regarding the service. Mr Martin advised that social media had had a positive impact on abuse. Complaints to drivers happened from time to time, but there had been a reduction due to social media. The BUGS social media had national followers and most complaints go there rather than towards drivers.

Another Member asked whether there was any feedback from the reduction of the SB8 service. Mr Martin advised that because the service was so poor, many people hadn't noticed a difference. There had been some people contacting BUGS through social media asking for alternatives.

The Chair thanked Mr Martin for his contribution to the meeting.

It was recommended that an electric minibus should be considered to be put into place with a service running from the shops/commercial units that will be developed on the ground floor of the Guinness development, or from the Court House to the Mecca Bingo and pedestrianised shops. This would create a link from the new bus interchange to the town centre for people with mobility issues.

## 5 **UPDATED MAPPING DOCUMENT FOR THE BUS SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Chair informed Members the next Environment and Economy Select Committee meeting would be held on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October and would also be centred around buses. They would invite Stevenage Borough Council Officers and groups from the community to attend. The Scrutiny Officer added they had confirmation from a group representing those with visual impairments and confirmation from the Irish Network.

It was **RESOLVED**: That the Committee noted the updated mapping document.

## 6 **URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

There was none.

## 7 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.



8 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was none.

**CHAIR**

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**Are your members able to use the bus service in Stevenage easily or are there challenges to using the service?**

- Use it, but its unreliable
- not the right stops
- doesn't turn up all the time and it often late

**Are your members able to get onto and off buses safely?**

Yes, no concerns were raised.

**How often do your members use bus services each week?**

- 6 times a week
- 8 times a week
- Daily
- weekly

**Are the services that your members use regular and reliable?**

- Not reliable, if I have an appointment, I have to get a taxi, can't rely on the bus, doesn't always turn up.
- No not at all, had to wait ages in the winter, I can't be in the cold for that long.
- I have to miss INS events as I wait for a bus and it doesn't turn up, so I miss it, used to be so good going to Bedwell.
- Not going through Haycroft anymore, so I have to walk to the Methodist Church, which is too far, especially coming back, it can be ½ hour with shopping. Driver told me no one wants to do this route because of Haycroft. There used to be 3 stops here.
- No, big bus can't go down Wigram way, so will only come if it's a small one, and they don't let us know so I could be waiting but the bus will miss Wigram Way and just go to Burwell or the Hyde. They don't let us know so I am sometimes waiting, and it just doesn't turn up.
- SB1 is very unreliable.
- B7 went the wrong way.
- I've stopped using the bus – I walk form the Old Town now, I can't wait around as it never turns up.

**What could be done to improve the service?**

Provide more buses, make them reliable.

**Additional Comments**

- They stopped us tapping our bus passes for months, that's wrong, it looks like we don't get the bus and they do it so they can cut all the buses and so no older people use it.
- We can tap the bus pass most of the time but not all the time.
- SB1 – had to wait 50 minutes last week, used to be every 20 minutes.
- If the 11 is cut so is the 6 so I then have to walk to Bedwell and I can do that when the weather is ok but not when its bad.
- The driver on the 6/11 gets confused and forgets which route he is doing and goes the wrong way.

- We used to have great bus service but not anymore and it means old people can't go anywhere.

**Would any of your members be interested in meeting with SBC Officers and Members to share their views about bus services?**

3 Irish Network Members said they would be happy to discuss this further with Members.

## **Response from Herts Vision Loss Group**

Stevenage Sight Life Group discussed SBC Environment and Economy Select Committee questions on the local bus services. These are their responses:

### **1. Do you use the HertsLynx – intalink service? How do you find this service?**

Group unsure what HertsLynx is. Prefer paper copies of bus timetables. Not everyone has a mobile phone or computer access.

### **2. Are you able to use the bus service in Stevenage easily or are there challenges to using the service?**

The group found the information shown at bus bays at Stevenage bus station and all stops using a display screen, but the print was too small with poor contrast. They also found the display screen was placed too high.

They commented that some buses park in a different bay to the one the timetable/display screen states.

They would prefer all screens to display bus information in real time not just the timetable – to reduce the amount of information.

At night with no attendants there is no help unless a bus driver can be of assistance.

### **3. Are you able to get onto and off buses safely?**

Leaving the bus can be hazardous especially as people are allowed to get on the bus before all passengers leave.

They found some bus drivers start driving before all the passengers are seated.

The group noted that some buses stop a short distance from the kerb making it difficult/slower to exit the bus.

Verbal instructions (as on a train) are helpful.

Travelling on a bus in the evening is difficult – especially in recognising the correct stop to exit.

### **4. Are the bus services that you use regular and reliable?**

No – often do not arrive – no way of knowing if a bus has been cancelled.

People often have to wait without information.

**5. How often do you use bus services each week?**

Most of the group use the buses regularly – it's their only mode of transport unless they use a taxi or have help from relatives.

**6. What could be done to improve the service?**

An attendant should be always present at the bus station.

The driver waits until all the passengers exiting the bus leave before new passengers get on.

Temperament of drivers is usually good but not always.

Larger text with good contrast on display screens – placed at eye level height and away from sun.

More bus stops to have display screens.

Buses to be painted a bright colour that is in contrast with surroundings – red or yellow, not green or blue.

To have bus stops close to pedestrian crossings.

Training to include understanding of visual impairment in all ages.

**7. Would any of your members be interested in meeting with SBC Officers and Members to share their views about bus services?**

Yes

Please forward the groups views to the Stevenage Borough Councils Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee.

Thank you

Alison Macdougall

Herts Vision Loss volunteer

To the Portfolio Holder and Team.

- 1) Please can you offer your impression of events in the March of this year, when Arriva cancelled the Zebra contract for electric buses in Stevenage. I respect that SBC has no formal responsibility for running bus services, but the provision of bus services for our community is integral to thousands of daily journeys in the town, and an important part of a vision of economic growth which is sustainable.
- 2) The Bus Station has positive and negative features. The seating for passengers in the station is good. As is the convenience shop and café. However, there is space for further public seating around the bus station, and concerns about the cleanliness of the facility, particularly the floor. What inspection regime is in place to ensure that services at the bus station can be improved at this important local transport hub.
- 3) Many local concerns have been expressed about the current connectivity of the Bus Station to the town, and the challenges this presents to bus passengers who have long term condition or disabilities. The alighting area at the bus station is 370 paces from the centre of Event Island Square, and 450 paces from the central Clock Tower. There is no provision of any hireable mobility aids, anywhere near the Bus Station, and overall directional signs to the Bus Station are poor across the town centre area. The provision of travel information is ok on the screens in the bus station, but there is no screen at a lower level to support those in wheelchairs, or information as to how the information can be accessed by an app on a handheld device. Why is this?
- 4) A regular conversation needs to take place about bus services, around, and to and from Stevenage, to encourage improvements in services for Stevenage Residents. What value would you ascribe to an annual “bus summit”, which invites HCC, Arriva, (and other bus service providers), neighbouring District Authorities, and Bus User Groups, to sense check service delivery, and offer feedback on improvement in services. Whilst offering a more coherent vision of sustainable bus services for the future.

Questions to Community Groups.

- 1) Please offer a view on the reliability of bus services in Stevenage, and whether services are currently improving. What are the daily frustrations with services. Travel information, cleanliness of vehicles, cost of tickets?
- 2) Can you offer a view on the frustrations those with long term conditions or disabilities face when using buses?
- 3) Would you appreciate the opportunity to be consulted on changes to services, or offer feedback to Hertfordshire County Council or Arriva on local bus services?
- 4) Is it fair to say that the bus is not an alternative, it is a necessity for many living in our town. With out it lots of people are more isolated, less healthy, and facing problems holding down jobs?

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**Updated Document – 10 October 2023**

**Mapping exercise for E&E Select Committee – Bus Service Scrutiny Review**

| Issue   | Who identified to address this/provide data and interview? (whether they are internal SBC or external partner) | What evidence / data can they provide?                     | Meeting interview/ evidence received date: (Link to Committee meeting where evidence/interview was undertaken) | Meeting scheduled for date: How will the info be gathered? (i.e. formal meetings, informal sub-groups, written responses) | Action & date required<br><br>If complete sign off in table:                            |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| Agree Scope for the review<br><i>Page 12</i>  |  | N/A  | Draft scope for the review was agreed at 14 June 2023 meeting  | <a href="#">14 June 2023</a>  | <a href="#">Updated</a> with Members comments at 14 June Meeting                        |
| Agree a form of words with the Chair for the questions for witnesses – Prioritise witnesses for 6 July 2013 | Chair of E&E Select Committee and Scrutiny Officer.  | N/A  | <a href="#">6 July 2023</a>  | Included in agenda for 6 July 2023.   | Deadline - Monday 26 June 2023 ✓  |
| Interview the HCC Executive Portfolio Holder, Highways & Transport  | Cllr Phil Bibby, HCC Executive Portfolio Holder, Highways & Transport  | Will be linked to the HCC Transport Unit Officer response. | <a href="#">Minutes 6 July 2023</a>  | Interview at E&E Thursday, 6 July 2023<br><br>Spoken evidence at meeting.   | Invite by Scrutiny Officer by Mid-June ✓<br><br>Written questions circulated 26/06/23 ✓ |
| Interview a representative from HCC Passenger Transport Unit  | Simon Aries, HCC Director, Transport, Waste & Environment.   | Expecting some written response to the data                | <a href="#">Minutes 6 July 2023</a>  | Thursday, 6 July 2023   | Invite by Scrutiny Officer by Mid-June ✓  |

Agenda Item 6

| Issue  | Who identified to address this/provide data and interview? (whether they are internal SBC or external partner)                        | What evidence / data can they provide?   | Meeting interview/ evidence received date: (Link to Committee meeting where evidence/interview was undertaken) | Meeting scheduled for date: How will the info be gathered? (i.e. formal meetings, informal sub-groups, written responses) | Action & date required<br><br>If complete sign off in table:   |
|--|---|--|--|---|--|
| <p>2023</p> <p>Interview a representative from Arriva Bus, Centrebus and Uno Bus Company</p> | <p>Dan Tancock HCC Transport Unit.</p>  | <p>request &amp; verbal response to the questions raised by the Chair – 06 07 23</p>                           |  | <p>Written response to data request and questions &amp; spoken evidence at meeting.</p>                                   | <p>Data requested 21/06/23 ✓<br/>Written questions circulated 26/06/23 ✓</p>   |
| <p>Interview a representative from Arriva Bus, Centrebus and Uno Bus Company</p>             | <p>Michael Jennings, Area Head of Commercial Arriva South Kent, Medway, Essex and Southend Hertfordshire, Luton and Bedfordshire.</p> | <p>Expecting some written response to the data request and to the questions raised by the Chair – 04 09 23</p> | <p>Insert link to Minutes of 4 September 2023</p>  | <p>Monday, 4 September 2023</p>   | <p>Invite by Scrutiny Officer to Arriva Bus Company by Mid-June ✓<br/>Data requested 21/06/23 ✓<br/>Written questions circulated 26/06/23 ✓</p> <p><i>Centrebus and Uno Bus approach still needed – requested contact details from HCC Transport Unit.</i></p> |
| <p>Interview a representative from local bus user group BUGS</p>                             | <p>Representative from local bus user group BUGS</p>  |  | <p>Insert link to Minutes of 4 September 2023</p>  | <p>4 September 2023 - Spoken</p>  | <p>Invite by Scrutiny Officer by Mid-June ✓</p>  |

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|  |  |   |  | evidence at meeting.  |  |
| Interview the SBC AD Planning and Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed            | SBC AD Planning and Regulatory, Zayd Al-Jawed  | Any planning policy related docs – links to be sent to Members.   |  | 10 Oct 2023 - Spoken evidence at meeting & any relevant supporting documents.   | Invite by Scrutiny Officer                                   |
| Interview with Exec Portfolio Holder for Transport.                    | Cllr Lloyd Briscoe, SBC Executive Portfolio Holder for Transport.  | Verbal input.   |  | 10 Oct 2023 - Spoken input at meeting.  | Invite by Scrutiny Officer                                   |
| Interview the SBC Climate Change Officer & SBC Head of Climate Change. | Veronica Chan, SBC Climate Change Officer & Fabian Oyarzun SBC Head of Climate Change                          | Any relevant docs that can be shared with Members re environmental sustainability and public transport. |  | 10 Oct 2023 - Spoken evidence at meeting & any relevant supporting documents.   | Invite by Scrutiny Officer                                   |

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|---|--|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Interview HCC Executive Portfolio Holder for Sustainability, Cllr Eric Buckmaster</p> <p>Page 20</p> | Cllr Eric Buckmaster, Executive Portfolio Holder for Sustainability.   | Will be linked to the HCC Sustainability Officer response.                                |  | <p>10 Oct or 1 Nov 2023</p> <p>Written response to questions. Oral evidence.</p>  | <p>Invite by Scrutiny Officer by 30 June 2023.</p> <p>✓ Lynne Ceeney, Director for Sustainability passed on to a colleague, who passed on to a colleague who referred to the original HCC Transport Officer</p> |
| Interview HCC Director of Sustainability  | Lynne Ceeney, Director for Sustainability, HCC   | Any relevant docs that can be shared with Members re Sustainability and public transport. |  | <p>10 Oct or 1 Nov 2023</p> <p>Written response to questions. Oral evidence</p>   | <p>Invite by Scrutiny Officer by 30 June 2023.</p> <p>✓ Lynne Ceeney, Director for Sustainability passed on to a colleague, who passed on to a colleague who referred to the</p>                                |

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|--|--|---|--|---|---|
|  |  |   |  |   | original HCC Transport Officer  |
| Have a “critical friend” to help the review<br><br>Page 21   | Approach former Councillor Adrian Brown to provide some input as a current bus driver working in the industry in a “critical friend” capacity and also Cllr Michael Downing as a regular bus user. | N/A                                     | Interview with Cllr Michael Downing completed 27 09 23   | To be either scheduled as a witness at an E&E meeting or arrange separate session with the Chair – to be determined.      | Invite by Scrutiny Officer by Mid-June ✓ (follow up with an email – by 30 June)<br><br>Meetings with the Chair & VC & Cllr Downing (27 Sep) ✓ & former Cllr and current bus driver – Adrian Brown (3 Oct) |
| <b>Issue for review to cover -</b><br>Various data requests from partners – Bus Companies, and HCC Transport Unit.   | HCC Transport Unit & various Bus Companies   | As detailed elsewhere in this document. | Data received from Arriva – 4 September  | Data request to HCC and Bus companies.  | Send email request by Scrutiny Officer by 23 June ✓ (HCC & Arriva)  |
| <b>Issue for review to cover -</b><br>Consider alternative options for zero emission buses in Stevenage. What lessons can be learned from the failed ZEBRA | Covered by session with HCC & Arriva 6 July and 4 Sep.   | As detailed elsewhere in this document. | Covered at meetings on 6 July and 4 September.   | Written questions to witnesses  | ✓   |

| Issue   | Who identified to address this/provide data and interview? (whether they are internal SBC or external partner)  | What evidence / data can they provide?                    | Meeting interview/ evidence received date: (Link to Committee meeting where evidence/interview was undertaken)                      | Meeting scheduled for date: How will the info be gathered? (i.e. formal meetings, informal sub-groups, written responses) | Action & date required<br><br>If complete sign off in table:                        |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (Zero Emissions Bus Regional Area) scheme for Stevenage? Are there any other opportunities for future funding schemes?        |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Issue for review to cover -</b> Provide a focus on the state of the current bus services in Stevenage                      | Covered by session with HCC & Arriva 6 July and 4 Sep.  |   | Covered at meetings on 6 July and 4 September.  | Written questions to witnesses  | ✓   |
| <b>Issue for review to cover -</b> Barriers to people using public transport and ways to encourage more bus use/modal shift.  | Herts Vision Loss Trustees, Alison MacDougall and service users, Lorna Whitaker. Irish Network Older People Group, Ann Meldrum, lead petitioner for Bedwell Bus Service |   | Covered with all witnesses and specifically witnesses from Herts Vision Loss and Irish Network Older People Group – 10 Oct meeting. | Written questions to witnesses  | Will be completed with interviews with Herts Vision Loss charity and Irish Network. |
| <b>Issue for review to cover -</b> Site visit to an authority that has an existing Electric Bus – possibly Oxford or Coventry | A group of E&E Members: (Chair Cllr Rob Broom, Vice-Chair Cllr Adam Mitchell, Cllrs Jim Brown, Conor McGrath and Graham Snell.  | Circulation of a written note following the site visit to | Site visit arranged and completed – reported to 10 Oct meeting.   | Site visit to be arranged.  | ✓ (Completed 13 Sep 2023)   |

| Issue   | Who identified to address this/provide data and interview? (whether they are internal SBC or external partner)  | What evidence / data can they provide?   | Meeting interview/ evidence received date: (Link to Committee meeting where evidence/interview was undertaken)  | Meeting scheduled for date: How will the info be gathered? (i.e. formal meetings, informal sub-groups, written responses) | Action & date required<br><br>If complete sign off in table: |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|
|   |   | Potters Bar Garage.  |   |   |  |
| <b>Issue for review to cover - E&amp;E</b><br>Members conduct bus journeys around Stevenage to see ease of use and quality of service |   |  | To be arranged by individual E&E Members.   | Member led activity.  | To be arranged by E&E Members                                |
| <b>Issue for review to cover - Equalities &amp; Diversity Issues</b>  | Various witnesses.<br><br>The review could reach out to disabled umbrella group to canvass opinions.<br><br>Interviews and Surveys of Herts Vision Loss Trustees, Alison MacDougall and service users, Lorna Whitaker. Irish Network Older People Group, Ann Meldrum, | The review should consider what equality issues there are for bus users in Stevenage such as access to bus services for disabled users, older people, young people as well as the impact on other people who are low income. | Partially met by interviews with Invision Sight loss group and Irish Network for older people – 10 Oct meeting. | N/A   | ✓ (10 Oct E&E)   |

E&E 23

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Notes from E&E Select Committee Site Visit to Metroline Potters Bar Bus Garage –  
Wednesday 13 September 2023 – 11am – 12.00 noon.

E&E Members present:

Chair – Cllr Rob Broom  
Vice-Chair - Cllr Adam Mitchell  
Cllr Graham Snell  
Cllr Jim Brown  
Cllr Conor McGrath

Meeting with Metroline Bus Garage Manager, James Wright.

Members were shown the Mark 1 original electric buses 2019 model, the Mark II 2022 model and the electric charging points infrastructure at the garage.

The Metroline Garage operates buses under a Transport for London franchise model. They are paid per mile, not on the number of passenger journeys completed. James said that the franchising model is very expensive for the commissioning authority. However, the franchising model does give local authorities more say in local services, with a likelihood that more services would be sustained, which are marginal when trying to run at cost.

Metroline bus garage has a fleet of 109 Buses:

29 Electric  
40 Hybrid  
40 Diesel

There are 3 main manufacturers of electric buses serving the UK market:

Wright Buses a Northern Ireland based Company  
An Anglo-Indian Company  
BYD (Build Your Dreams) Chinese Company

Metroline buses are built by Wright Buses, Northern Ireland. Each bus costs circa £500k but can be cheaper if bought under a larger order. The lifespan of the electric bus is estimated over 14 – 16 years old, but this is uncertain given the unknown battery life. The Life cycle of a diesel bus is typically 12 years.

The first-generation electric buses (2019) have already been made obsolete by the second-generation model. The reason the first-generation model was not being continued was down to reliability issues. The batteries struggle to recharge in extreme weather conditions both hot and cold. Depending on the ambient temperature, in certain conditions safety features in the battery charging unit/batteries shut down if the ambient temperature is too hot (anything above circa above 30 degrees Celsius). Also, in extreme cold the charging capacity and range was greatly reduced.

There was a problem in the industry on settling on a universal charging infrastructure, all the main 3 companies had their own equipment and they were not compatible with each other. The industry was working towards a common type so that this would reduce costs and make the market more competitive.

The weight of the batteries was a problem. Mark 1 Electric Buses were 11 metric tonnes and Mark II were 13 tonnes. This causes problems in the mark 1 model, as all the batteries were housed over the rear axle, which caused difficulties for manoeuvrability, with a poor turning circle. In the Mark II model, although heavier, this had been overcome by displacing the weight around the vehicle (around the luggage rack at the front of the bus, behind the driver and under the stairs and in the rear of the vehicle).

The Charging period was between 6 to 8 hours and were done overnight.

The range of the vehicle varied. At best the second-generation mark II model was 175 miles, on a cold day this was reduced to 109 miles. The best performance of the first-generation buses was 150 miles. Electric Buses do not perform as well in hilly areas. Single deck buses and smaller buses perform very well with electric transmission. James Wright suggested that electric vehicles suit large cities where their range is limited, for rural areas electric range would be more of a challenge. Members concluded that given Stevenage's small geographic area smaller electric buses would suit 30 minute circular routes around the town, but bus routes that take passengers further afield to other towns in the county, such as Hatfield, St Albans and Watford may be less successful for electric vehicles.

Electric Buses were popular both with drivers and passengers. They are easier to drive, with no gears or clutch, but take a time to adjust to as the acceleration is very fast compared to hybrid and diesel buses. They are quiet and far less hot than diesel models which generate a lot of heat which is unwelcome in the hot summer months. Anecdotally, some passengers wait for the electric bus as the journey experience was far superior to the equivalent diesel with a cooler, quieter, smoother ride.

The manufacturers and operators are clearly trying to make the use of buses a more pleasant experience. With small improvements like the USB points, and more space for wheelchairs, and more use of audio announcements for information on which stop the vehicle is at. There was an obvious pride in the cleanliness of the vehicle.

Regarding other power transmissions, at a separate Metroline garage there are 10 Hydrogen powered buses, but these are often off the road due to a lack of access to a steady supply of hydrogen fuel. The Hybrid electric and diesel models perform well. Metroline have no experience of using any biofuels in their vehicles. It was presumed that the reason they had not used this was down to the price point of the fuel compared to diesel.

Bus drivers take 2 months to train and Metroline had experienced the same recruitment and retention issues that Arriva had. Electric buses have speed limiters and telematics on board to regulate speed and monitor driving.