

Appendix A

Many of the recommendations contained within the Select Committee's report relate to matters that fall primarily within the remit of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) or Arriva rather than Stevenage Borough Council directly.

To help inform this response, the Council has contacted both HCC and Arriva for an update on progress against those recommendations.

Of the 13 recommendations made by the Select Committee, Stevenage Borough Council has a more direct role in relation to Recommendations 1, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13. An update on those recommendations is set out below:

Recommendation 1 - It is recommended that SBC Executive Portfolio Holder for Transport be invited to consider holding a yearly transport seminar for Stevenage bringing together the HCC transport unit and the public transport providers to hold them to account regarding the performance of their contracts with a view to champion local users' needs and bring a focus on improved performance.

Answer from SBC: SBC Officers meet HCC officers regularly on transportation matters, including through the strategically focused 'Transport Mission Steering Group' which considers longer term policy and strategy direction for the town and wider area. In addition, Officers and Members meet counterparts on project specific matters that relate to transport schemes and upgrades across the town. As yet the scope of these meetings does not include contract management discussions with HCC. SBC officers have received support from Arriva on this initiative.

The Cabinet Member for Transport (SBC) would welcome regular quarterly Meetings with Stevenage (BUGS) to discuss the local provision of services, representation from the County Transport Team would be welcomed.

Recommendation 2 - It is recommended that (i) Arriva be strongly encouraged to update the real time information for bus services on their website and App, as bus users rely on this information to wait for bus services, if cancelled or delayed; and (ii) that real-time information also be included at bus stops, so passengers know when the next bus is due and also if a service is not running etc.

Answer from HCC: 520 RTI display units have been installed across Hertfordshire, including 25 interactive information kiosks. HCC are working with system providers to enable RTI tracking on the Intalink website.

There are complexities arising from cross-journey predictions, which are particularly problematic at bus stations and interchanges. Work is currently underway to identify a solution to this issue.

In relation to cancelled journeys and service disruption messaging, a potential solution does exist; however, at present it does not provide a sufficient level of accuracy to instil confidence among members of the public. There is a risk that inaccurate disruption messaging could lead to passengers missing their journeys.

Answer from Arriva: Arriva have recently launched a new website and app with much better real-time information and are making a concerted effort to ensure all cancellations are shown on these platforms.

Recommendation 3 – It is recommended that (i) to help wheelchair users and disabled and the visually impaired that some (a least two or three) of the information screens in the bus interchange be lowered and the contrast of those screens be adjusted to provide a good contrast to enable those users to be able to read the information more easily, and (ii) in addition, that a similar sign to the RNIB signage used near the ticket office at the railway station be installed at the bus interchange.

Answer from SBC:

The Council is committed to ensuring that Stevenage Bus Interchange is accessible for all users and has taken positive steps to progress the Committee's recommendations.

In April 2026, the Council met with the Stevenage Sightlife Group to hear directly from people with visual impairments about their experiences of using the interchange and to better understand the practical improvements that would make the greatest difference. This engagement has provided valuable insight into how the facility can be made more inclusive and user-friendly.

Following the meeting, the Council has commenced a review of accessibility arrangements within the interchange. This includes assessing the positioning of passenger information screens within the reception area, including opportunities to lower selected screens to improve accessibility for wheelchair users and disabled passengers. The Council is also considering measures to improve screen readability, including contrast and visibility, to assist people with visual impairments.

In addition, the Council is exploring a wider package of accessibility enhancements in response to feedback received. These include the potential introduction of audio announcements, improved wayfinding, embossed or tactile signage to help identify individual bus stops, and options similar to the RNIB guidance signage already in place at Stevenage Railway Station.

The Council intends to continue working closely with the Stevenage Sightlife Group, Hertfordshire County Council and other relevant partners to help shape and prioritise future improvements. This ongoing collaboration will help ensure that the interchange continues to evolve as an accessible, welcoming and inclusive facility for all residents and visitors

Answer from Arriva: Arriva will assess the feasibility of relocating selected passenger information screens within the Bus Interchange to more accessible positions.

Recommendation 4 - It is recommended that HCC Passenger Transport Unit and Arriva need to engage in an open and ongoing conversation with disability groups like Herts Vision Loss to help refine and shape the services, as it appeared to Members that this was not currently the case; and (ii) the use of trusted apps for those with disabilities be championed by bus providers and transport authorities at HCC.

Answer from HCC: HCC is currently developing a Bus Network Accessibility Plan (BNAP) which will devise a minimum standard for accessibility across the local bus network; this work will be completed by April 27. Development of the BNAP will include extensive engagement with local disability groups. HCC has procured consultants from the RNIB to help develop and deliver the BNAP.

A full audit is being carried out on all local bus infrastructure and a dedicated accessibility working group will be established to ensure stakeholder input. The BNAP will also review the accessibility of websites, apps and all service information (i.e. printed publicity/ timetables).

HCC have recently met with Stevenage Vision Loss group and have informed the group about the work on the BNAP.

Answer from Arriva: Recently Arriva and HCC participated in a session with Stevenage Sight Life and Hertfordshire Vision Loss.

Recommendation 5 - It is recommended that Arriva should revisit their driver training regarding courtesy and care towards disabled passengers. This should be looked at based on the evidence submitted by Herts Vision Loss, who reported that their members were, on occasion, not given sufficient time to be seated when boarding or were dismissed or ignored by some drivers when asking for assistance or information about the bus route etc.

Answer from Arriva: This is picked up in our initial driver training and ongoing CPC training

Recommendation 6 - It is recommended that HCC Passenger Transport Unit and Arriva advance the roll out of audio announcement on buses as well as visual displays screens, which need to be retrofitted to all existing fleet and be provided as standard on any new fleet stock.

Answer from HCC: The DfT announced in 2023 that they were introducing rules that require almost every local bus or coach service to provide audible announcements and visual displays identifying the route and direction, each upcoming stop and the beginning of any diversions.

The regulations started on 1 October 2023, but when each vehicle must comply depends on when it was first used on local services.

“First used” means when the vehicle first met the criteria for local service use, regardless of where it operated.

Compliance deadlines by vehicle age are:

On/after 1 Oct 2019: must comply from 1 Oct 2024

1 Oct 2014 – 30 Sep 2019: must comply from 1 Oct 2025

1 Jan 1973 – 30 Sep 2014: must comply from 1 Oct 2026

Partially compliant vehicles: must comply from 1 Oct 2031

Answer from Arriva: All fleet should be fitted with AV screens by the end of the year.

Recommendation 7 - It is recommended that (i) In the first instance, bus companies should be encouraged to consider electric vehicles or other alternatives to move away from fossil fuels; and (ii) during the long transition to EV electric replacement buses and considering the variable supply of hydrogen, that HCC and Arriva be invited to consider using a more environmentally friendly Biodiesel which produces 90% less carbon than conventional diesel.

Answer from HCC: A full transition to alternative fuels instead of diesel should remain the long-term objective; however, the financial implications of such a shift must be carefully considered. These costs extend beyond the vehicles themselves to include the necessary supporting infrastructure. For example, installing electric charging points in depots can significantly reduce available space. Even in larger, traditional “ex-National Bus” depots, where fleet sizes are typically smaller, the space required to charge an entire fleet overnight is substantial.

Additionally, the operational limitations of electric vehicles, particularly their range before requiring recharging, must be taken into account. This may necessitate changes to existing service patterns and the wider operating model.

Answer from Arriva: We continue to consider Zero Emission vehicles, but currently they are too expensive compared to diesel vehicles. We need funding support to move forward with ZEV. However, we are investing significantly in our fleet in Stevenage this year, bringing in a number of brand-new Euro 6 diesel vehicles which will improve the overall emissions of the bus fleet in Stevenage significantly.

Recommendation 8 - It is recommended that regarding new housing developments, that SBC Planning and Development Officers should consult with Bus Companies regarding their views to help avoid any unintended consequences to buses using routes into new housing developments and that HCC Highways Officers should be invited to consult with bus companies regarding the introduction of traffic calming measures such as speed bumps, narrowed roads or chicanes that can make bus journeys slower and therefore not run to optimum journey times. If there are to be any changes made to road schemes for traffic calming these should consider such measures as bus gates.

Answer from SBC: *Hertfordshire County Council is a key consultee on major planning applications within the borough, particularly where highway and passenger transport matters arise. In considering larger development proposals, Stevenage Borough Council's Planning and Development Officers take account of consultation responses from relevant statutory consultees, including Hertfordshire County Council, whose comments may reflect passenger transport and bus access considerations. The detailed design of highway layouts, traffic calming measures and bus route suitability is primarily a matter for Hertfordshire County Council as the local highway authority, working where necessary with bus operators. Through the planning process, the Council will continue to have regard to the need for new development to be accessible and to avoid unintended impacts on public transport operation wherever these matters are raised as part of the consultation process.*

Answer from Arriva: This is currently happening, co-ordinated by HCC.

Recommendation 9 – It is recommended that regarding the new bus station interchange:

- (i) SBC, fully consider the use of the Bus Station in its new location, and the user experience. In respect of the pedestrian access from the Bus Station through to the shops, the existing signage be reviewed to ensure that it is clear which way to walk to the shops to encourage pedestrians to use the designed route to the pedestrianised Town Centre along the front of the Leisure Centre, rather than to the side of Daneshill House/Registry Office, which should be discouraged as it was equidistance to the route in front on the leisure centre, but was less safe, as it is on a main road;
- (ii) Officers and Partners should consider means of assisting older and disabled users to move from the Bus Station into the town, such as a shuttle bus*, and if an opportunity arises in the future to enhance the provision of mobility services that consideration be given to locating these at the Bus Interchange;
- (iii) that the provision of WiFi be considered at the Bus Interchange to help passengers access the Arriva App; and
- (iv) that Officers and Partners consider all available options to ensure that there is a safe and comfortable user experience at the Bus Station.

Answer from SBC: *The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that the new bus interchange provides a safe, accessible and positive experience for users. In relation to pedestrian movement between the bus interchange and the town centre, signage and wayfinding will be kept under review as part of the wider management of the town centre environment, with the aim of encouraging use of the most appropriate and convenient pedestrian routes. In respect of measures to support older and disabled users, including any future mobility or shuttle-type provision, this would require consideration alongside partner organisations and service providers. The Council will also continue to consider, with relevant partners, opportunities to enhance the overall user experience at the interchange, including matters such as comfort, accessibility, safety and digital connectivity.*

Recommendation 10 – It is recommended that as part of the regeneration of the town centre strategically placed bus stops near public infrastructure will need to be provided, for example there should be a bus stop provided at the new leisure centre when this is built at the town centre gardens, St Georges Way site, as well as consideration of a new bus route to service any new stops.

Answer from SBC: *The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that town centre regeneration proposals are supported by accessible and well-located public transport infrastructure. As regeneration plans for the town centre progress, consideration will continue to be given to how new development can be served by nearby bus stops and appropriate public transport connections. The provision of new bus stops and any changes to bus routes, however, will require engagement with Hertfordshire County Council as the local transport authority, together with bus operators, as these matters sit beyond the Council's direct control. Stevenage Borough Council will continue to work with relevant partners to help ensure that public transport access is prioritised, and services to the new Leisure Centre are in place.*

Recommendation 11 – It is recommended that Arriva and HCC be encouraged to consider the provision of a spine route running from the north to the south of the town.

Answer from HCC: Following BSIP improvements to bus services in Hertfordshire, there are now at least five buses an hour on Mondays to Saturdays (301, 400, 725, 907/907A) operating along London Road into town from the south with three buses an hour continuing to Old Town and Lister Hospital. Because of this, it is considered the need for a shuttle service is of reduced priority.

Stevenage is within the proposed franchise area, and all options are, in essence, open to consideration. However, there is a risk with cross-town services that a delay on one side of town has a material effect on the other. This can lead to a skewed amount of lost mileage towards the side not affected by the delays. There would also need to be discussions as to which northern and southern areas are linked

Answer from Arriva: This is something we have looked at and do not believe that it would be commercially viable. The 301 provides this link whilst also offering other journey options. Bus accessibility at Roaring Meg is very poor and some improvements here to improve the attractiveness of bus to this key destination in Stevenage would have drive further patronage on this corridor.

Recommendation 12 – It is recommended that SBC via the Executive Portfolio Holder for Enterprise and Transport lobby HCC to consider different funding models for the provision of bus travel for Hertfordshire as it was felt that it was right to challenge the funding model which was not currently delivering a service that was fit for purpose.

Answer from HCC: Hertfordshire County Council is actively pursuing Franchising opportunities for North and East Herts, including Stevenage. It is hoped that the project moves to advanced business case situation with the DfT shortly.

Answer from SBC: *The Council recognises that responsibility for bus service funding models sits primarily with Hertfordshire County Council as the local transport authority, rather than with Stevenage Borough Council directly. However, where appropriate, Stevenage Borough Council continues to raise local concerns and advocate for improvements to bus provision through its ongoing engagement with Hertfordshire County Council and other relevant partners. Any decisions on alternative funding models, however, remain a matter for Hertfordshire County Council and bus operators.*

Answer from Arriva: I think the issue is more the level of funding rather than the funding model. The current bus network relies predominantly on being paid for through the fares of those using the services and this leads to a level of service driven by the resource that can be funded through this demand driven revenue. Any increase in service level requires more resource which means significant funding to bridge the gap between the commercial level of service and the desired level, as the costs of enhancements inevitably are higher than the additional revenue they generate. This funding is not currently forthcoming regardless of the funding model. The other question to consider is how current funding towards buses is used effectively, and whether the objective of it is to address social needs, ie providing a minimum service level of coverage to as many residents as possible, and in turn spreading the funding quite thinly across a large number of services and geography, or focussing on smaller areas to drive higher bus use across the area. In simple terms, if you have funding for a single vehicle, should it be used to provide an irregular rural service, giving a service to an area that would be otherwise unserved and addressing the social need, and consequently generating very little usage, or should it be invested in enhancing already good services to drive larger patronage growth and having a bigger impact on a town's economy and levels of traffic congestion, perhaps in an urban area moving a service from every 20 minutes to every 15 minutes. Ultimately, these are difficult decisions to be made by the appropriate elected politicians, but the questions remain regardless of the funding model.

Recommendation 13 - It is recommended that consideration should be given to a circular bus route between Roaring Meg, Leisure Park, Old Town and the Town Centre, and that officers of the Council review this to identify any funding opportunities, if possible as an electric bus service.

Answer from HCC: There have been previous services that operated around the estates in Stevenage without accessing the town centre. These had steady but low use. There are opportunities to introduce such a service with developer contributions going forward.

Answer from Arriva: Service 301 provides much of this link currently but generates more patronage than a separate service would generate because it also links areas further afield to the Old town and the hospital. The shift of retail from the Town Centre to Roaring Meg has had a huge impact on bus patronage in the town. Historically, the main destination in Stevenage was the town centre and with the costs of parking there, the bus was a very attractive proposition even for car owners, and this was reflected in higher patronage, more frequent services and less traffic congestion. The shift with retail in recent decades towards Roaring Meg has reduced the attractiveness and footfall of the Town Centre significantly, and the offer of free parking makes the bus very unattractive to car owners driving patronage lower across the town. Also, the layout

of Roaring Meg very much prioritises car usage, with bus stops very much on the periphery, and being of a low quality in terms of accessibility and attractiveness to passengers. Addressing the infrastructure issues will drive more patronage and in the longer term a better level of service to Roaring Meg.