

APPENDIX A

LOCAL BUS SERVICES

Report by Luton Borough Council's
Task and Finish Group

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APPENDIX A

Chair's Foreword

"Our study was initiated by Luton Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board as part of a programme to examine those issues which local residents have identified as being most important to them.

Although the main reason for this analysis was to address the problems that local bus users were experiencing, it was hoped that as part of our discussions and the gathering of evidence, we would establish a plan to encourage Luton's car drivers out of their vehicles and onto public transport, in order to create a positive impact on the traffic congestion in the town. There was not an immediate solution to this conundrum but with the major bus companies agreeing to participate in SMART ticketing and to publicise timetables, together with general improvements to services especially to places of work on the outskirts of town, there is a possibility that at least some drivers will leave their cars at home.

Despite a wide publication of the work of this committee, I have been very disappointed in the response from local residents. We had a regular attendance of two members of the public with the maximum being four. However, their contribution was very valuable as was the information gathered by myself and other members, when waiting at bus stops. The Task and Finish Group has attempted to consider all the issues that have been raised and the introduction of a regular surgery will be extremely beneficial and local residents will feel that their voices are being heard.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to my colleagues on the Task and Finish Group, the bus companies and Council staff who have given evidence and members of the public for their contribution. I would particularly like to thank Matt Hussey who supported us in our work and without whom this report would not have been completed"

Councillor Katie Foord, Chair of the Task and Finish Group

Task and Finish Group's Recommendations

- 1. That the Executive request that the Passenger Transport Unit Manager review all Tendered Bus Services on an Annual basis to ensure that the correct routes are being subsidised.**
- 2. That the Passenger Transport Unit Manager in conjunction with the Traffic Signals and ITS Manager request that all bus operators make easily available timetables and ticket offers/deals, and display basic information and timetables on a jointly owned stand in the Mall Shopping Centre including the use of electronic displays where possible once the Real Time Information has been introduced.**
- 3. That the Council's Executive request that the Passenger Transport Unit Manager and bus operators ensure that all bus routes are easily accessible to all users and work together to realign certain bus routes to enable people to get to out of town centre employment areas particularly during times that people need to get to and return from work.**
- 4. That the Chair of the Local Bus Services Task & Finish Group write to all bus operators encouraging them to sign up to use the Hip Hop Scheme and future ticketing schemes once Smart Ticketing is fully operational across the conurbation.**
- 5. That the Social Justice Unit request that all bus operators ensure that all drivers are proactive in helping and engaging with elderly and disabled users, and that all drivers under take Disability Awareness Training.**
- 6. That the Social Justice Unit request that all bus operators ensure that all single deck buses on local bus services are DDA compliant from as from January 2016 and that all double deckers on local bus services are DDA compliant as from January 2017.**
- 7. That the Council's Executive instruct the Passenger Transport Unit Manager to establish a Local Bus Services Surgery as a forum for residents and a facility on the Councils Website to raise issues and concerns which can be fed back to bus operators on a monthly/bi monthly basis, and that an Annual Report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board detailing the complaints, concerns with, and outcomes achieved.**

'Local Bus Services' Task and Finish Group

1. The issue of Local Bus Services was identified as a priority during the Local Democracy Week (10th – 14th October) public consultation on work programme items for the Overview and Scrutiny Board.
2. The purpose of the task and finish group was to review the Local bus services in and out of Luton (excluding Greenline, Coaches services and the Luton Dunstable Busway) to provide a better understanding of how bus service timetables, fares and routes are determined.

The Task and Finish Group Approach

3. The 'Local Bus Services' Task and Finish Group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Board in October 2011. The first meeting was held on 15th February 2012, at which Councillor Katie Foord was elected as Chair of the Group. The other Members of the Group were Councillor Mike Garrett (Cons), Councillor Doris Hinkley (Lib), Councillor Rachel Hopkins (Lab), Councillor Mahmood Hussain (Lab), Councillor Diane Moles (Lib) and Councillor Mark Rivers (Lab), together with project and support from officers in Luton Borough Council's Democracy and Scrutiny Team and the Passenger Transport Unit.
4. The Task and Finish Group held seven meetings in total taking evidence from a wide range of expert witnesses, including the Council's Passenger Transport Unit, Transportation & Regulation Service Manager and the Consultation and Engagement Manager. External evidence was taken from Arriva, Centrebus and Grant Palmer, which are the three main bus operators serving Luton. Evidence in the form of focus groups were held with the Disability Resource Centre and Luton Senior Peoples Forum, the Employees Survey and the Luton Citizens Panel. The Task and Finish Group published a press release in the local papers and on the Council's website to raise awareness of the review and to encourage community involvement in the review. The Task and Finish Group also looked at consultation which had taken place in September 2011 with the Luton citizens Panel.

Exclusions

5. The Task and Finish Group agreed not to include in their study services such as Greenline and National Express and the Luton/Dunstable Busway.

6. The Luton and Dunstable Busway was initially excluded from the review, but during the course of the review it became evident that the Luton Dunstable Busway would bring technological benefits to local buses across the Borough, and included as part of the evidence gathering process.

The Evidence

Local Bus Services In Luton

7. Local bus services in Luton are provided by three main bus operators; Arriva the Shires, Centrebus and Grant Palmer Passenger Services. The majority of the services were operated by companies commercially, that is to say that they are cost effective and profitable for the bus operators. Largely, bus routes were radial services operating from Luton and Dunstable town centres or from peripheral estates of Luton and the Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis conurbations. Routes and frequencies were designed and developed by the bus operators to meet customer demand, and were registered with the area Traffic Commissioner, with limited input from the local authority.
8. Evening and Sunday services that proved less profitable, or were not commercially viable might be subsidised by the Local Authority to ensure residents and vulnerable groups in particular had reasonable access to facilities (local amenities, shops, employment, education and entertainment). Such services were called Tendered Local Bus Services (TLBS) and the route number would usually be the same as the commercial peak time route and would be operated by the operator who secured the route during the tendered process, which was not necessarily the normal commercial operator. Certain commercial routes could be extended to include areas with less residents, or extra journeys authorised (and paid for) by the Local Authority in order to meet demand at times when it was not otherwise commercially viable. These routes were subsidised under deminimis arrangements and were not subject to competitive tender.
9. Local authorities did not have a statutory duty to provide or support local bus services (deminimus or TLBS). However, each authority had to be mindful of accessibility issues including the ability of residents to access places of employment, and other facilities such as hospitals, surgeries, colleges.
10. In addition to services run by the main operators in Luton, there were a number of other urban, interurban and some express services registered as local bus services operating in or through the main routes or bus corridors in the conurbation and to the airport. For example the 'Stagecoach' services to Bedford and Milton Keynes (VT99), the Arriva service to London

(Greenline 755 & 757), and UNO route 636 to Harpenden and Hatfield complemented incumbent services. The Luton Parkway, airport shuttle was commercially operated by the First Group.

11. Concessionary Travel on local bus services formed a significant portion of the total passengers carried in Luton and it was suggested that any review of local buses should be considered in that context. There were approximately three million concessionary journeys commencing in Luton each year. The minimum statutory concessionary travel scheme consisted of providing free travel on local bus services within the Borough boundary between the hours of 09:30 and 23:00 daily and at anytime during the weekends. Luton Borough Council had approved a series of enhancements or 'add ons' to the statutory minimum which consisted of free travel on local bus services at anytime within the Luton and Dunstable conurbation, with the provision to allow companions of disabled users to travel free. This would also extend the scheme to include community transport (Shopmobility and South Beds Dial-a-Ride).

12. Below are various ticket schemes available to residents of Luton:

PLUSBUS – An intermodal ticketing scheme whereby rail travellers could buy a bus 'add on' enabling free travel by bus in the Luton and Dunstable conurbation for the duration of their rail tickets validity.

Student Savercard – The student Savercard scheme was operated by Luton Borough Council (PTU) in partnership with Children and Learning, and Luton Colleges. Students aged between 16 and 19 attending a full time college course could purchase most on bus products for approximately 50% discount.

Travel Aid – The scheme offered discounts of 50% to jobseekers in order to assist those who needed to travel to attend interviews.

Hip Hop – This was a multi operator ticketing scheme that was currently facilitated by Luton Borough Council. Those who purchased a *Hip Hop* ticket from either Arriva or Centrebus driver can have unlimited travel on either operators buses for the period of the tickets validity.

13. The Task & Finish Group noted that the Council do not fund commercial local bus services directly, but supported local bus services by:

- Reimbursements for concessionary travel
- Tendered Local Bus Service (TLBS) contracts
- Contracted School buses
- School bus passes

- Student Savercard scheme
- Publicity and infrastructure

Tendered Local Bus Services

14. The Task and Finish Group looked at in detail 'Tendered Bus Local Services. Evening and Sunday services that were less profitable, or not commercially viable, may be subsidised by the Local Authority to ensure residents and vulnerable groups in particular, had reasonable access to facilities (local amenities, shops, employment, education and entertainment). Such services were called Tendered Local Bus Services and the route number would usually be the same as the commercial peak time route, and operated by the operator who secured the route during the tender process, which was not necessarily the normal commercial operator. Some commercial routes might be extended to include areas with less residents, or extra journeys authorized (and paid for) by the local authority, to meet demand at times when it was not otherwise commercially viable. These routes were subsidised under deminimis arrangements and not subject to competitive tender. Tendered Local Bus Services contracts were normally let on a subsidy basis, that is to say the Local Authority contributed a fixed amount per day towards the operating cost and the bus operator retained fares taken on the bus.
15. Local Authorities did not have a statutory duty to provide or support local bus services (deminimiss or TLBS). However, each authority must be mindful of accessibility issues including the ability of residents to access places of employment, and other facilities like hospitals, surgeries, colleges and the like.
16. Evening and weekend tendered services must be regarded as a long term accessibility investment in order to secure commitment from bus operators and the confidence of passengers. This was particularly important given that residents might have considered the provision of such services prior to making important choices about where they may live and work. As such these services did not lend themselves to frequent amendments of either routes or timetables.
17. In addition to the routes wholly subsidised by Luton Borough Council, it also contributed to routes subsidised by other local authorities and indeed, in some cases other local Authorities contributed towards the cost of some routes tendered by Luton Borough Council. These routes normally operated in two or more administrative areas and were benefit to residents in each authority.

18. The Task and Finish Group discovered that each route was sent out to tender, with the lowest bidder winning the contract. The winning operator would also take any fares made on that service.
19. All tendered local bus service routes were reviewed annually, prior to retendering, or upon receipt of advice from area committees, instructions from the portfolio holder for transport, or when an unmet demand has been identified by PTU officers. Such a review consisted mainly of service reliability and patronage. Tendered contracts were normally let for a minimum period of five years before being retendered.
20. Generally, patronage on tendered routes was low when compared to normal local bus services (otherwise bus companies would operate them commercially). Therefore, passenger numbers alone could not be perceived as a reliable benchmark of a given routes value to the community. The availability of alternative modes of transport (car ownership), location of places of employment, access to shopping, leisure, hospitals, and other transport connections for onward travel all contributed to the overall value to the community.
21. The portfolio holder and members, might, from time to time, seek to introduce additional services to reflect perceived demand and member priorities, subject to budgetary constraints. However the tendered local bus services in Luton had remained fairly consistent for the past five years with the exception of minor changes to a number of services and at least one service becoming commercially viable as a result of increased demand.

“Although tendered routes are reviewed annually, how do we ensure that the correct routes are being subsidised, some routes might be so under used they might not be financially viable to subsidise anymore!”

Councillor Foord (the Chair) commenting on evidence given at the Task & Finish Group on 14th June 2012.

Recommendations:

1. **That the Executive request that the Passenger Transport Unit Manager review all Tendered Bus Services on an Annual basis to ensure that the correct routes are being subsidised.**

Needs Analysis and Access to Information

22. The Task and Finish Group were aware that there had already been several consultation exercises undertaken that incorporated local bus services. The Luton Citizens Panel, which had a membership of 1000 residents, had

conducted a survey in September 2011 with a 50% response rate. The survey found that only 8% of residents over 65 years of age and used the bus mainly for shopping trips to the town centre.

23. The survey had also found that the majority of residents were satisfied with bus services provided in Luton, with satisfaction rates ranging from 57% to 78%. This was particularly the case with the number of stops, (78%), ease of getting on/off (78%) and frequency (74%). Residents were least satisfied with the accuracy (59%) and amount of information (57%).
24. Other consultations undertaken with the Luton Citizens Panel found a dissatisfaction rate of one in five. Dissatisfaction was mostly found from children and young people including students, aged between 25 to 44 and residents who lived in deprived areas. The majority of complaints surrounded the cost of travel and the lack of information in regards to information and discounts available to passengers.
25. Consultation with younger users, who were dependent on bus travel, had shown that if better and more affordable services were provided they would use buses more frequently. Young people had also suggested that better services should be provided in periphery areas of the town, and that electronic information should be used at all stops in the town.
26. Evidence from the Employees Survey in regards to Work Place Travel had shown that not many employees used the bus, but that 50% used alternative means of sustainable transport, for example walking and cycling. Respondents had also indicated that if fares were cheaper they would use buses more frequently.
27. In regards to travel concessions available to bus users, many people were not aware of these. Therefore the Group needed to look at how users could be informed of offers, schemes etc.

Transport Strategy and the Luton Dunstable Busway

28. Although strictly not within in its original remit, the Task and Finish Group briefly looked at the introduction of the guided busway, as it would bring benefits to local bus services overall.
29. The Transport Strategy service covered three main areas of major transport projects, highway implications of planning developments and transportation strategy sustainability. Key projects currently under construction were the Luton Dunstable Busway and the new interchange outside of the central railway station. Also, it was planned to build a travel information hub next to the interchange next year on the Bute Street car park site and the southern end of Station Road. As part of the Town Centre Transport Scheme, Hucklesby Way would be extended under the station Car Park through to

the junction with Hitchin Road, continuing via an improved Crescent Road to Crawley Road and St. Mary's. The intention would be to sever Guildford Street as there was a conflict between pedestrians and cars.

30. ~~The~~ **It was hoped that the** Luton Dunstable Busway would have several benefits for the remainder of local bus services in that it would bring to the town:

- Real time passenger information
- CCT and Help Points at bus stops
- Level boarding
- Travel plans and initiatives
- Digital Voice Announcements
- Smart Cards

31. The introduction of the above would mean these measures, service standards would be improved, and bus users would be able to have improved travel to major sites in Luton (e.g. Power Court and Napier Park mixed use sites) as well as other entertainment and educational facilities within the wider conurbation.

32. However, by providing an improved transport infrastructure, there was a danger that such a service would be under used by residents. Therefore, the Council were looking at a number of initiatives over the next 2-3 years funded by Government Grants (the Local Sustainable Transport Fund and Better Bus Fund) to encourage people to use the local bus services. Low levels of public transport use was more prevalent in more affluent areas of the town, although these were well served by public transport. To encourage usage, 24,500 households would be contacted annually to answer questions on journeys and plan how these could be made using more sustainable travel such as the bus.

"There's seems to be a reoccurring problem in the lack of information and availability of timetables other than that of Arriva's, Maybe all bus operators should share the same stands?"

Councillor Hinkley, commenting on Evidence from the Task & Finish Group on 1st May 2012.

"In Milton Keynes Shopping Centre, they have display screens showing when and where buses go from, why can't we have this in Luton?"

Member of Public, Task & Finish Group on 26th July 2012.

33. Over the course of gathering evidence, it became apparent to the Task and Finish Group that bus companies and the Council were not very good at advertising schemes and initiatives to customers, as access to information such as bus timetables and ticket offers/deals was not were not easily available to many residents many residents and it was suggested that a local bus companies 'club together' to have a jointly owned stand in the Mall Shopping Centre including the use of electronic displays where possible.

Recommendations:

2. **That the Passenger Transport Unit Manager in conjunction with the Traffic Signals and ITS Manager request that all bus operators make easily available timetables and ticket offers/deals, and display basic information and timetables on a jointly owned stand in the Mall Shopping Centre including the use of electronic displays where possible once the Real Time Information has been introduced.**

Evidence from Local Bus Operators:

Arriva

34. On the 2nd April 2012 Mohammed Hanif, Depot Traffic Manager and Steve Pomponio, Town Centre Manager from Arriva the Shires and Essex, gave a presentation in regards to bus services provided by Arriva in Luton.
35. Arriva UK Bus was part of the Arriva Group, which was owned by Deutsche Bahn. Arriva was a leading pan-European public transport operator with around 47,500 employees and operations across 12 European countries.
36. Arriva runs a range of transport services including buses, trains, coaches, waterbuses and airport-related transport services, and bus and coach distribution.
37. Arriva had recently purchased 31 new buses, 12 of which would be assigned to Routes 31 and 38 later in the year. Smart Card ticketing would be introduced in September on all Arriva buses in order to make boarding and using buses more customer friendly. Arriva had invested in it fleet in Luton in order to attract more passengers. Also a partnership had been created with the Luton & Dunstable Hospital which would give staff discounted fares and help alleviate parking issues at the hospital. Arriva also used marketing and promotional offers to encourage bus usage.
38. In regards to servicing out of town employment areas, no specific routes were planned other than those that already existed. However, additional routes would be considered if there were any new developments. The numbers of passengers on each bus route were checked on a regular

basis. If found that a large number of passengers used a particular route, additional resources would be allocated. However, if underused a service would be withdrawn. Arriva also conducted customer surveys, the findings of which would be used to determine where additional resources were required and a business case would be developed.

39. In conjunction with the Council, Arriva and other bus providers would be introducing 'Real Time Passenger Information' across the conurbation and Travel Plan Initiatives (TPI) in order to improve efficiency and customer satisfaction. At present Arriva were 75 to 80% compliant on arriving on time. This was due various issues for example: developments in the town centre and traffic congestion due to road works. Arriva were aiming for 95% compliance.

Centrebus

40. At its meeting held on 1st May 2012, Dave Streeton, Operations Manager, Centrebus Ltd gave a presentation in regards to bus services provided by Centrebus in the Luton area.
41. Centrebus was founded in 2001 and initially known as Ansty Buslines. Centrebus was a privately owned company that operated a number of services around Leicestershire, Grantham, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire in areas that Arriva had scaled down its bus operations. Centrebus also competed with Arriva on some routes in Leicester, Luton and Stevenage. It also operated services in the High Peak Borough in Northern Derbyshire and surrounding areas through its Bowers subsidiary, which was rebranded Bowers Coaches sometime after being taken over, and was now one of the fastest expanding private bus operators in the United Kingdom, having gained presence in Derbyshire, Cheshire and West Yorkshire within 18 months.
42. Within the Luton and Dunstable conurbation, Centrebus was made up from the combining of Lutonian and In Motion bus companies, with the Dunstable depot increasing in size over the last five years from operating 21 buses to 43 buses with 67 drivers. The company operated the following services in Luton:
 - Service 10 Marsh Farm
 - Services 17/17a/19/19a to Stopsley
 - Service 46 to Hemel Hempstead
 - Service 231 to Caddington/Dunstable
 - Service 366 to Welwyn Garden City
 - Service X31 to Dunstable/Hemel Hempstead/Toddington/Milton Keynes and Leighton Buzzard (Core Service).
 - Service 20 to Toddington

- Service 79 to Pulloxhill/Barton
 - Service 901 from University of Bedfordshire (Luton Campus) to Putteridge Bury Campus (new contract)
43. In regards to vehicles, Centrebus currently had 43 buses of which 32 were low floor wheel chair accessible with 11 non compliant, which equated to 75% of vehicles being compliant. Centrebus were gradually updating its fleet as and when suitable vehicles were available. Centrebus were also in the process of converting destination blinds from Manual to electronic to aid viewing for all customers.
 44. CCTV had been fitted to five of its vehicles on the Service 10 Route to Marsh Farm, to provide added security and to help fight increasing insurance costs due to the high number of fraudulent claims in Luton. All vehicles were fitted with satellite navigation and radio connection with Real Time Information which had the added benefit of all data being held for 12 months which aided the research of complaints, monitoring bus arrival/departure times and highlighting problem areas so that timetables could be adjusted accordingly.
 45. The majority of contracted services had either had a price freeze or in most areas tendered services had been withdrawn due to funding. This had a major impact on Centrebus which would have an estimated loss in profit of over £200k at the Dunstable Depot alone. This was exacerbated by rising fuel costs, which had increased by over 30% in the last six months, with no likelihood of prices decreasing. It was estimated that this would create an additional annual cost of £300k. In 2012 the amount of fuel rebate that Centrebus could claim back from the Government would be reduced by over 15%, which would have a further financial impact on bus companies, of which on average one company was closing per week. Luton was recognised as one of the main fraudulent claim towns within England, with people intentionally causing accidents or claiming spurious injuries. It was estimated that Centrebus in Luton had had to pay in excess of over £170k in claims it considered were fraudulent.
 46. Luton, especially the town centre was a major area of delays due to high levels of traffic congestion, which could seriously affect service running times. This would be exacerbated over the next 12 months due to major works around the town whilst the Guided Bus-Way and new bus interchange were built.
 47. The Real time Information ACIS operating system would allow the monitoring of all services at any time of the day and linked up to all relevant bus stops to pass on real time information to waiting customers. He added that of the three operators in Luton using the system, Centrebus had the best performance figures which it hoped to maintain.

48. All Centrebus staff were currently undertaking all five courses required to obtain their Driver Certificate of Professional Competence Card (CPC), which all Passenger Carrying Vehicles (PCV) licensed drivers would have to have by 2012 to be able to drive a bus. Several staff were also completing their NVQ in customer care and driving standards.
49. Fares in Luton had increased in March 2011 on all single, return and day ticket fares. However, Centrebus had frozen prices for all weekly and monthly tickets, with the weekly ticket costing only £8, which was competitively priced being £6 cheaper than its main competitor. There were no immediate plans to increase fares, but the company needed to ensure that local services operated effectively. Centrebus regularly researched new areas to operate where others might have failed. For example, it now operated a Community Connect service from Wootton to Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire, which was a pre booked service in some villages, and had also undertaken a contract with the University of Bedfordshire to take students to and from the Putteridge Bury Campus.
50. Centrebus were also looking to move to new premises by the end of 2012 in Luton, with the new depot being of a size to allow the company to expand at a future date.
51. In order to attract and retain customers, Centrebus had several patronage initiatives and sales which had helped not only increase passenger numbers but had also given existing customers extremely good offers. Patronage on Centrebus' main service in Luton had increased significantly over the last two years, for example passenger numbers on Service 10 Luton to Marsh Farm had increased by 6.33% in 2010/11 and by a further 8.7% in 2011/12, and Stopsley services by 9.94% in 2010/11 and 14.4% in 2011/12.
52. Centrebus also sold the innovative 'Hip Hop' ticket which allows travel on both Centrebus, Arriva and Grant Palmer buses in the Luton area, with Centrebus making up 45% of the sales. The company also had its own club card that offered 15% discount for members on all single and return fares for an annual fee of £10. It also ran the 'Tango' return ticket that offered a 15% discount for two adults travelling together at weekends and school holidays, with two children travelling free. Also, Pay Point sales on monthly tickets were heavily reduced.
53. Centrebus had a central complaints department based at its Head Office in Leicester, who dealt with all comments. All reports were investigated and reported on by the depots. Over the last three years, Centrebus had worked hard to tackle the issues raised by customers and felt that this was reflected in the volume of complaints reported over the last three to four

years which had fallen from 449 complaints in 2009 to 142 in 2011, with only 36 complaints made so far in 2012.

54. Centrebus self-monitored its services for compliance and punctuality by using the ACIS system to help provide detailed information of every service performance. Evidence had shown that there were particular problems in the Luton and Dunstable conurbation due to road works and changing speed limits; however, on average Centrebus were on average near or above the set 90% compliance rate.

Grant Palmer

55. At its meeting held on 1st May 2012, the Task and Finish Group heard evidence Grant Palmer Limited on bus services provided in Luton.
56. Grant Palmer Ltd were based in Flitwick, Bedfordshire, and employed one hundred members of staff. The company owned forty vehicles serving thirty five routes in Central Bedfordshire, Bedford borough, Milton Keynes, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Luton. Although Luton was not its main territory Grant Palmer's main routes in Luton were the No. 3/35 from Park square via Cuttenhoe and Tennyson Road and the No. 30 serving the Capability Green, Luton Parkway and London Luton Airport.
57. Grant Palmer reported that Luton was a good growth area for the company, with £130k invested on a new bus for Route No. 30. All vehicles had been installed with Real Time Information equipment in anticipation of the real Time Information Launch in the near future.
58. In regards to out of town employment areas within Luton, Grant Palmer served both London Luton Airport and Capability Green which were both major employment areas within the town with services leaving from Park Square from 7.20am until 6.30pm.
59. The Task and Finish Group were concerned that Grant Palmer no longer accepted 'Hip Hop' Tickets.

"We (Grant Palmer Ltd) had to withdraw from the 'Hip Hop' scheme as there was no profit for us, as only the company that sold the ticket received any income, all other operators, including us, that the ticket was then used with subsequently would not receive any income from the ticket. We found that for the majority of services provided by Grant Palmer, hip Hop tickets had been used for a return journey only and we received nothing from the original sale therefore the scheme was not financially viable, but once the Smart Card System is operational, Grant Palmer would sign back up to accept the Hip Hop tickets .

Grant Palmer, Grant Palmer Ltd, giving evidence at the Task & Finish Group on 10th July 2012.

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60. the Task & Finish Group were advised that the introduction of Smart Ticketing would ensure that all income from Hip Hop tickets would be allocated proportionately to each bus operator that a ticket was used on.
 61. Over the course of the review, concern was raised that out of town employment areas were poorly served by bus routes at times when people needed to get to and from work.

“There’s several out of town employment areas in Luton such as Sundon Park, but people can’t get to them by bus before 9.00am, no wonder people aren’t giving up their cars if they can’t get to work on time!”

Councillor Garret, a Member of the Task and Finish Group on 1st May 2012

Recommendations:

3. **That the Council’s Executive request that the Passenger Transport Unit Manager and bus operators ensure that all bus routes are easily accessible to all users and work together to realign certain bus routes to enable people to get to out of town centre employment areas particularly during times that people need to get to and return from work.**
4. **That the Chair of the Local Bus Services Task & Finish Group write to all bus operators encouraging them to sign up to use the Hip Hop Scheme and future ticketing schemes once Smart Ticketing is fully operational across the conurbation.**

Consultation

Luton Senior Peoples Forum

62. As part of the Evidence gathering process, the Democracy and Scrutiny Officer and Councillor Hinkley attended the meeting of the Luton Senior Peoples Forum held on the 18th April, in order to consult with senior citizens about their experiences, views on needs and improvements required of local bus services in Luton.
63. The Luton Senior Peoples Forum highlighted the following points:
 - Some bus shelters need improving. It was pointed out that LBC was responsible and had been using a £200k funding to improve them;

- Access on and off buses was a problem, specially carrying shopping. It was noted that new buses have facilities to lower to kerb and have access for wheel chairs, which older buses lacked. Double-decker buses also not user friendly;
- Taxis parking at the bus stops outside the Galaxy Centre causing a problem for passengers accessing their buses;
- Many would use evening bus services if available;
- Some buses not stopping close enough to kerb, forcing people to step down on road, a particular problem for those with walking stick;
- Some bus drivers driving off before elderly people able to sit;
- The Driving Standards Agency of the Dept of Transport run 'mystery shoppers' to assess quality of bus services and report back to bus companies. Not known if any done in Luton; if not done before, might be worth inviting some visits;
- Lack of services at week-ends;
- Difficult to get hold of time tables for buses other than Arriva;
- Some buses running early not waiting at bus stops until correct times;
- Some bus drivers not stopping at stops with passengers waiting;
- Information availability – where to get details of bus services;

Disability Resource Centre

64. On the 24th April Councillor Hinkley and Democracy and Scrutiny Officer, attended the Disability Resource Centre in order to consult with Mick Dillon, about the experiences, views on needs and improvements required for disabled users of local bus services in Luton.
65. At his meeting, the following key points were raised:
 - The Overall experience of buses by disabled users was poor.

- Although some buses were DDA compliant, the service also relied on the good will by drivers as on occasion buses did not 'kneel' for wheelchair although it was able to.
- Some drivers would not stop to pick up disabled passengers.
- An entire route needs to be accessible and not just the buses. The correct hardware i.e. bus stops need to be accessible with no double deckers. Therefore, buses were not the preferred mode of public transport for disabled users.
- All buses must comply with the accessibility Regulations by 1st January 2017, and all coaches by 1st January 2020.
- Although drivers had to undertake 'Disability Awareness Training' drivers needed to be proactive in helping disabled users and not leave stops until all passengers are settled. Also not all disabilities were obvious so drivers would need to engage with their customers.
 - Spaces allocated for wheelchair users are often taken up by pushchairs and shopping etc.
 - Although raised bus stops were being introduced in the Borough, buses needed to lower themselves to the correct height. Buses had the hardware but often it was felt drivers had the 'wrong attitude'.
 - More often than not, other passengers would not help disabled passengers, but this was human nature, drivers would avoid confrontation with passengers.
 - Buses needed to serve out of town centre employment areas better. This would help reduce unemployment within the town.
 - Disabled passengers would use services such as 'Dial-a-Ride' rather than standard bus routes.

Recommendations:

- 5. That the Social Justice Unit request that all bus operators ensure that all drivers are proactive in helping and engaging with elderly and disabled users, and that all drivers under take Disability Awareness Training.**

6. **That the Social Justice Unit request that all bus operators ensure that all Single deck buses on local bus services are DDA compliant from January 2016 and that all double deckers on local bus services are DDA compliant from January 2017.**

Older Person's Partnership

66. At the request of the Older Person's Partnership, the Democracy and Scrutiny Officer attended a meeting to give feedback on the Task and Finish Groups findings and proposed recommendations detailed in this report.
68. Members of the Older Person's Partnership commented that the recommendations reflected what the Group had been trying to achieve over a period of time and that the review of Local Bus Services had been very thorough.

Conclusion

67. During the course of gathering evidence, there have been numerous complaints and issues in regards to specific routes. Therefore, it was proposed that Members request that a monthly surgery be established with the Passenger Transport Unit to enable residents to raise any issues and concerns so that the Council can feed these back to bus operators directly.

"The No. 24 bus services, which covers most areas of Luton and Dunstable is 'disgusting' and needs new buses"

"There's no bus services on Birds estate on Sundays and Bank Holidays"

"Because of inconsiderate parking on Selbourne Road, there are no bus services there anymore"

"Why aren't there any buses on Montrose Avenue, the nearest bus stop is 20 minutes walk away!"

Comments made at the Luton Senior Peoples Forum, 18th April 2012

Recommendation

7. **That the Council's Executive instruct the Passenger Transport Unit Manager to establish a Local Bus Services Surgery as a forum for residents and a facility on the Councils Website to raise issues and concerns which can be fed back to bus operators on a monthly/bi monthly basis, and that an Annual Report be**

submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Board detailing the complaints, concerns with, and outcomes achieved.