

5th June 2024 - Meeting of the Public Transport Working Group

In Attendance: Cllrs Wendy Brooks and Graham Parker. Non-Councillor member John Sillett Sarah Foote (Acting Town Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

The working group had agreed to meet to establish what a Town Council could do for public transport to ensure any recommendations to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee complies with the remit of Lowestoft Town Council (LTC).

The Highways Act 1980 allows a local council the power to contribute to a community bus. Cllr Parker suggested East Suffolk Council (ESC) lead on expanding a community bus service, with contributions from the surrounding parishes.

This would be feasible, but as the County Council has the statutory authority to provide public transport, it would be more appropriate for LTC to contribute towards Suffolk County Council's (SCC) endeavours to improve public transport. Further discussion was required with SCC to agree on how the two councils could collaborate to enable SCC to improve the bus service in Lowestoft.

Cllr Parker declared he was part of the ESC Working Group to improve the transport system in the area.

The working group agreed its aim was to implement a bus service that ran through the eastern side of Gunton estate.

When queried how this would be achieved, the working group agreed that a simple survey could be undertaken in the parish to demonstrate the demand for improved bus services to SCC. The companies initially contacted to participate in the public meeting could instead be engaged to contribute to the survey.

To progress the survey a statement of intention would need to be provided to the Climate and Ecological Emergency Committee (CEEC) who would make a recommendation on whether to proceed to Full Council. Members of the working group would produce this statement of intention for CEEC. Once this has been cleared, then SCC could be contacted for further discussions.

It was noted that the survey could not be undertaken until after the elections.

It was noted that there was no officer availability to undertake the formation of the survey and the data analysis of the survey results. A suggestion was made to consider contracting an external company to provide the survey and analyse the data, which would require approval from CEEC as the funding would be allocated from the Climate and Ecological Emergency budget. One suggestion was to engage East Coast College to analyse the data results.

Under Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Town Council could provide a donation to an existing community bus to support the increase of service of a community transport initiative, such as Buzzabout, which could be discussed further by the Budget & Loan Sub-Committee.

The LTC representative to the Northern Parishes Board could request information on the uptake of the Buzzabout service to gauge its use and what funding may be required to extend its service.