

A.12 APPENDIX 1

FINAL REPORT OF THE MAINSTREAM AND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP

FOLLOWING ITS INQUIRY INTO:

**COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC
TRANSPORT**

DATE: APRIL 2024

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP

A decision was published on 14 August 2023 to agree that the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee would set up a Task and Finish Group to enable enquiries into the range of elements concerning mainstream and community transport provision. This proposal had been approved by Full Council.

The Task and Finish Group wanted to look into:

- Details of mainstream public transport across the District including bus routes and frequency.
- Issues being experienced with mainstream public transport as outlined to Councillors.
- Details of Essex County Council's subsidised bus services in the District and the associated funding.
- Details of community transport provision across the District and the funding for them from Councils in Essex.
- Publicly available data on car ownership in the District and use of public transport.

Partner engagement included:

- Representatives of the local Bus Operators and of community transport providers.
- Representative from Essex County Council in relation to subsidised bus services where there are no commercial services.
- Representatives of transport users.
- Corporate Director of Place and Economy.

The inquiry started on the 5 September 2023 and ran to March 2024.

THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INQUIRY

The Task and Finish Group agreed to focus on the provision, the extent to which it supports inter-modal exchanges, provides a meaningful alternative to private car usage for work, leisure and medical journeys.

The inquiry supported the then corporate plan themes of:

- A Growing and Inclusive Economy - Support existing businesses/More and better jobs;
- Building Sustainable Communities for the Future;
- Community Leadership Through Partnerships; and
- Joined up public services for the benefit of our residents and businesses.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP

The make-up of the task and finish group includes two Conservative, two Tending Independent and one Independent member of the Council. Members were:

- Cllr Steady (Chairman)
- Cllr Codling
- Cllr Doyle
- Cllr Ferguson
- Cllr Oxley

OFFICER SUPPORT FOR THE TASK & FINISH WORKING GROUP

Democratic services provided the review with administrative support. Evidence review and report drafting support was provided by the Corporate Director for Place and Economy. The Director of Planning attended meetings of the working party to provide advice on planning matters.

INVITEES AND PARTICIPANTS

External

Wendy Jackson – Local Bus Network Community Engagement Lead (ECC),
Pauline Mann – Tendring Community Transport
Debbie Hill - Harwich Connexions Transport Cooperative Ltd
Pam Playle - Walton Community Hospital Car Service
Wendy Jackson, Senior Transport Liaison Officer, Essex County Council
Angie Tillet, ESNEFT
Pauline Mann – Tendring Community Transport,
Debbie Hill - Harwich Connexions Transport Cooperative Ltd
Pam Playle - Walton Community Hospital Car Service

Internal

Keith Durran, Committee Services Manager , Tendring District Council
Gary Guiver, Director of Planning, Tendring District Council
Lee Heley, Corporate Director, Place and Economy

Note that the Leader of the Council, the Corporate Director (Place and Economy) and the Economic Service Manager met Heddingham buses in relation to levelling up in Clacton, rather than as a formal part of the scrutiny process; high level messages to Heddingham from that meeting are included in this report with the agreement of the company.

EXPECTED OUTCOME(S) OF THE INQUIRY

The purpose of the review was to consider the network of public transport provision (commercial and subsidised) and invite providers / commissioners to review those with the Council based on evidence identified. To look at community transport provision and where best practice could be shared to extend the network.

ACTUAL OUTCOME(S) OF THE INQUIRY

The inquiry found that there is a public transport system across the district that provides a wide range of services as an alternative to the car for the 20 percent of Tendring households without one, although it faces challenges of scale, frequency, and in some cases reliability. The system is mainly designed for travel to and from the coast to Colchester, rather than between towns in the district, with travel to and from Clacton to Harwich slow by public transport.

Transport providers and funders are seeking to offer the best services possible within the commercial and financial constraints they face.

While the bus network in Tendring is shrinking and issues of frequency and reliability were raised, providers from Clacton are making efforts to improve the service and seek increased public investment.

The rail services provides a good service from Manningtree on the mainline, and from other stations there are branch line services. There is a new train fleet which has increased reliability to 94% across the network, and 96% on the Clacton line. The frequency of the off-peak services from Clacton to London is currently just hourly. Rail can be an expensive form of transport for some residents.

Community transport provides a responsive service to people in need from Harwich, Clacton and Walton. The service faces challenges of being oversubscribed, and relying on short term funding and volunteer effort.

The more public services that are based in coastal towns, the less residents have the need to travel for essential services to Colchester such as health and education. The lack of subsidy to post-16 transport puts a strain on budgets for young people looking to carry on in education at Colchester Institute based in the town. And the hospital in Colchester requires residents to travel there. The Clacton diagnostic hub is an excellent example of bringing services to people in Clacton, reducing the need to travel.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to the Executive that Tendring District Council should:

- a) **Hold a summit with local transport providers including Hedingham and Chambers and Greater Anglia, to seek to improve the frequency, reliability and quality of local public transport services;**
- b) **Support advocacy for an improved rail service from Clacton, moving to a half hourly service;**
- c) **Take advantage of levelling up funding where available to support improved public transport;**
- d) **Engage with ECC and providers on the potential for Demand Responsive Transport to supplement the current public transport offer;**
- e) **Advocate where possible for services to be brought to coastal areas so that there is less need to travel for education and health care;**
- f) **Ask Hedingham to review the provision of a bus stop to support the new Marks and Spencer's store at Brook Park West, the Crematorium and the potential for park and ride to Clacton at peak tourist season building on the experience of the Airshow;**
- g) **Prioritise gaining developer contributions for new bus routes in the delivery of the revised Local Plan; and that**
- h) **Councils should take these recommendations into account when developing the Tendring Future Transport Strategy (ECC) and the Local Plan (TDC).**

CHRONOLOGY

Community Transport Visit
5 September 2023 Task and Finish Group Meeting
20 November 2023 Task and Finish Group Meeting

DETAILED FINDINGS OF THE INQUIRY

The findings of the review are set out below against the scope set for the Task and Finish Group.

1. Issues being experienced with mainstream public transport as outlined to Councillors

Buses provide vital transport in the Tendring area, with services across the district and into Colchester and beyond. Details of services are provided in later sections of the report. However, the issues raised from the Inquiry are set out below.

Frequency of buses was raised as an issue, as they are only hourly or two hourly between the towns in the district.

Bus service reliability is a challenge across Tendring, with congestion proving disruptive for maintaining schedules. Essex County Council tracks reliability issues across a range of corridors and hot spots. In areas like the route from Jaywick Lane to Earls Hall Lane in Clacton, severe traffic backups during peak times make it extremely difficult for buses to stay on schedule. Other problematic areas include Great Clacton's Oxford Road as well as routes between Weeley and Frating that suffer from heavy congestion. Separating the routes from Colchester to within Clacton has reduced the impact of Colchester congestion on Clacton timetables.

In January 2024 Heddingham announced the end of Clacton Town Route 7 - St Osyth Beach to Clacton and Route 8/8A - Clacton to Bockings Elm which were no longer commercially viable. Following consultation, Essex County Council announced in January that services would cease in July 2024 on the 99 evening Clacton to Walton route, as the current subsidy per passenger journey was £25.14.

Heddingham buses cross subsidise their commercial operations with education provision to support the provision of local services. For children under 8 years old, free transportation is offered if they live over two miles away from their nearest suitable school. For those over eight, subsidised travel applies if they reside more than three miles from the nearest school. However Heddingham's cross subsidy model also means there are fewer commercial services at school drop off and pick up times, and the fleet is often the double deckers required for school journeys.

Transport subsidies do not extend to further education or 6th form students once they complete compulsory schooling. Older students are expected to pay full fares for bus services or explore discretionary fare zone schemes offered by some operators in the area. The lack of subsidised transportation for post-16 education can pose affordability challenges. Students have to factor in added transport costs when deciding whether to continue studies after finishing secondary school, something which disproportionately affects lower income families.

Currently, there is no real-time bus tracking or arrival information available to passengers in Tendring district. However, there are opportunities to implement this technology to enhance the public transit experience. In urban centres, real-time information displays could be

installed at major bus stops and shelters to provide up-to-the-minute data on bus arrivals, and create links between rail stations and bus stops with bus information at major rail stations. Hedingham has an App for smart phone users which can track buses, and the company aims to increase take up, recognising the challenges promoting the App to a predominantly older ridership.

Community transport provides a service to local residents who need to attend hospital appointments on the hospital hopper, or want to dial a ride. However, the demand for the service outstrips the supply of vehicles and volunteer drivers and there is limited capacity to expand services.

While there are 14 train stations in Tendring, only Manningtree has a regular mainline service. Compared to other modes of transport trains are high cost, if not booked off peak in advance. There is only an hourly service off peak between Clacton and London.

2. Details of mainstream public transport across the District including bus routes and frequency.

2.a. Summary

The settlements in Tendring District are mainly built along branch railway lines which face Colchester. Getting between places within Tendring, such as Clacton to Harwich, Walton, or Brightlingsea is time consuming by bus. The route network for trains and buses is attached in the Annex.

2.b. Information on Rail in Tendring

The Tendring District is served by branch lines off the Great Eastern Main Line operated by Greater Anglia. The two routes are the Sunshine Coast Line from Colchester to Clacton-on-Sea/Walton-on-the-Naze and the Mayflower Line from Manningtree to Harwich Town.

Tendring District has 14 stations. Key stations include Clacton-on-Sea, Walton-on-the-Naze, Frinton-on-Sea, Harwich Town, Harwich International and Manningtree. Only Manningtree on has fast access to London on the mainline. It has a regular service that takes an hour to London at peak times. As a result it has the highest number of commuters in the district (783,000 entrances / exits from the station in 2022/23).

The branch lines have train stations that are commutable to Colchester, Ipswich and central Chelmsford. The Clacton and Walton lines join at Thorpe le Soken, which therefore has regular services. Despite its 1,600 inhabitants (2021 Census) Thorpe le Soken is the fifth most used station in the district (119,000 exits /entrances in 2022/23).

Services operate hourly Monday-Saturday on both branch lines, connecting to London Liverpool Street on the mainline. There are more trains at peak times.

It is possible to commute from Clacton to London. There are six commuter trains direct from Clacton to London in the morning between 05:40am and 07:10am. After that trains change at Colchester, and during the day there is only one train an hour from Clacton to London. These trains take an hour and half to reach Liverpool Street.

Rail does not effectively connect the coastal areas in the District. Clacton to Harwich would take three trains, an hour and 15 minutes each way and £25 return, compared to half an hour by car.

Trains journeys can be expensive for residents. Clacton to Colchester is £12:60 for a day return and take about 35 minutes. An annual rail card is £2,280. A Clacton to London peak time return is £69.70, and with a travel card is £83.70. An annual rail card costs over £7,000.

2.c. Information on the Bus network in Tendring:

Hedingham and Chambers (part of the Go Ahead Group) operates most of the bus services across Tendring, including routes between the main towns.

Major routes include the 74 (Clacton to Colchester via St Osyth), 76 (Clacton to Colchester via Weeley); the 107 and 105 (Walton to Colchester); and the 3 (Clacton to Harwich)

Service frequency is generally hourly or every 2 hours between towns.

Some villages receive limited service of 3-4 buses per day and others have no bus service at all.

Routes are set out in the Appendix

3. Details of Essex County Council's subsidised bus services in the District and the associated funding.

3.a. Summary of ECC's subsidised bus services in Tendring

Bus Service Operating Models: The major operator, Hedingham, runs services on a for-profit commercial basis. Bus routes that run during evenings, weekends, when they are not commercially viable are subsidized by ECC contracts. Essex County Council (ECC) will only subsidise up to £5 per journey, so route times with fewer passengers may have subsidy withdrawn and close, as is happening to the evening service from Clacton to Walton.

In the Tendring district there have been 18 bus services that receive ECC subsidies, primarily for evening and Sunday routes when demand is lower. However, these subsidies do not cover home-to-school transportation, which has separate funding sources and operations.

Overall, around 85% of bus services in Essex operate commercially without subsidy, with private operators deciding routes, schedules and fares. The remaining 15% receive subsidies from ECC to cover the operating costs.

When bus operators register new services or variations to existing routes, ECC conducts an impact assessment. If an operator cancels a route, ECC looks at other options - either putting the route out to tender for another provider, or leaving it unserved if there are alternative services in the area. In cases where a company pulls out of an area completely, leaving no other services, ECC may step in to subsidize a replacement route. However, they closely analyse passenger data and will only provide subsidies if the cost is less than £5 per journey. This metric helps determine if publicly funding the route is a viable use of resources.

The services supported by ECC in Tendring include:

- Clacton - evening services, routes to Jaywick, Bird's Hill after 7pm
- Service from Walton to Colchester running all times
- Weeley to Tendring Technology College
- Point Clear to Brightlingsea

- Clacton to Mistley
- Town service within Harwich
- Parkeston to Ramsey
- Evening/Sunday service from Colchester to Harwich
- Manningtree station to Dedham and Colchester
- St Osyth to Colchester, Monday-Friday
- Sunday service from Clacton to Colchester via Weeley
- Evening journey from Walton to Weeley into Clacton (formerly a return trip)
- Service along Clacton to Thorpe corridor

3.b. Ending highly subsidised bus services

Essex County Council reviewed its bus subsidised services across the County in 2023 / 2024. ECC looked especially closely at routes with a more than £5 subsidy, the target maximum subsidy, and had an expectation to close routes with a more than £10 subsidy. After consultation, ECC announced in January that services would cease in July 2024 on the 99 evening Clacton to Walton route, as the current subsidy per passenger journey was £25.14.

3.c. Bus services to new developments

New bus services to serve residential and commercial developments are almost wholly reliant on subsidies, making S106 developer contributions critical. When planning new routes, ECC aims for them to become commercially viable after around five years of subsidized support. Developers are asked to provide funds based on an assumption of no ridership initially. Typical contracts run for three years with one plus one year extensions until ridership can sustain the service. ECC aims to pool contributions along transportation corridors to subsidize viable routes from a number of developments.

However, Tendring District Council has had mixed success in securing S106 monies. Funding was obtained for services to developments like Hartley Gardens; however other major sites like Rouses Farm, Oakwood Park, and sites in Kirby, Halstead, and Hamford Cross secured little or no contributions for bus services.

3.d. Bus service improvement plan

In October 2021, ECC submitted a countywide Bus Service Improvement Plan as part of the government's National Bus Strategy. The plan lays out a vision for an enhanced bus network with integrated fares, better publicity, and priority measures for buses. A key element is conducting comprehensive area reviews for each district to assess their specific needs.

3.e. Possible future network improvements to support buses

Some significant opportunities to upgrade infrastructure for better bus services include improving the interchange at Manningtree station, such as modifications to the Lawford Dale roundabout to facilitate easier connections. Lowering the road under the railway bridge in Kirby Cross could allow double-decker buses to run, potentially doubling frequencies on that corridor. Dualling the road between Weeley and Frating is another option that could increase bus frequencies and alleviate traffic delays, allowing integrated bids for funding that also benefit other traffic. However, these proposals represent very large capital investments at a time of limited funding, compared to smaller-scale bus priority measures.

4. Details of community transport provision across the District and the funding for them from Councils in Essex.

4.1 Services

Harwich Connexions Transport

Harwich Connexions provides community transport services for residents of Harwich, Dovercourt, Parkeston and nearby villages. The accessible buses cater to those with disabilities, health issues or isolated locations. Bus passes are accepted on routes.

- The Hospital Hopper offers twice-daily direct bus service Monday-Friday between Harwich and Colchester hospitals for patients and visitors.
- The Dial a Ride flexible bus service operates 9am-5pm weekdays in the Harwich area, enabling travel to appointments, shopping, clubs or social visits.
- Recognised community groups, charities, schools and youth groups can also hire the buses.

Tendring Community Transport

- Dial-a-Ride: This is a door-to-door service for people who have difficulty using regular public transport due to disability, age, or other mobility issues. Passengers can book trips for shopping, medical appointments, social events, and more.
- Community Car Scheme: Volunteer drivers use their own vehicles to provide transport for people who have difficulty accessing public transport, particularly in rural areas.
- Group Hire: Community Transport Tendring has a fleet of minibuses and coaches that can be hired by groups for day trips, outings, and excursions.
- Shopmobility: They provide manual and powered wheelchairs and scooters for hire, allowing people with limited mobility to access shops and facilities in Clacton-on-Sea and Frinton-on-Sea town centres.

The dial-a-ride service has around 5,000 registered users, while the hospital hopper service for medical appointments has between 5,000-6,000 users. The social car scheme has approximately 900 users.

Clacton to Harwich

There is a shuttle community bus service jointly operated by Harwich Connexions and Tendring Community Transport across the towns and villages in the district. The service runs Monday-Saturday from 9am-5pm out of the Harwich and Clacton transport hubs. The services allow residents to access shopping, appointments, social activities, education, employment and more. The wheelchair-accessible buses with trained assistants help ensure the shuttles are inclusive for all community members.

Demand

However, the existing services are struggling to meet the growing demand in the area. There are no current plans to expand services in Tendring itself, as the need already exceeds what can be provided. To expand and better meet needs, additional funding would be required to purchase more vehicles and hire more staff. The large population of elderly residents on low incomes who cannot drive themselves is increasing demand faster than it can be met. As a result, some residents have to be referred to external car schemes.

Retaining drivers is an ongoing challenge, as the wages offered are not highly competitive.

Funding

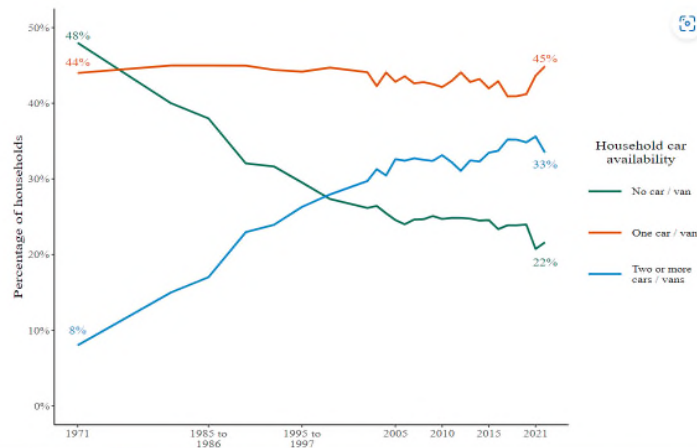
The current funding model includes an Essex County Council grant reviewed every two years, reimbursement of concessionary fares from ECC for flexible route services (95% of users have free bus passes), user fees for the social car scheme at 45p per mile to cover drivers' costs, and vehicle hire to non-profit groups. However, costs continue rising for aspects like replacing aging fleet buses at around £70,000 per vehicle. Securing additional funding streams would be required to expand community transport services.

Walton Community Hospital Car Service

Operating solely with volunteer drivers using their own vehicles, they offer personalised transport, though they no longer make trips into London due to congestion charges. Funded through a modest mileage rate (45p) that falls short of covering costs, this charity relies on the goodwill of volunteers to run the service. A small weekly contribution from drivers covers basic administration like stationery and meetings for the charity. With an ageing volunteer base of around 14 active drivers currently, recruiting new volunteers remains an ongoing challenge to sustain these community transport services in Frinton, Walton and Kirby Cross.

5. Publicly available data on car ownership in the District and use of public transport.

Chart 7: Percentage of households by car access: Great Britain (1971 to 1988) and England (1989 to 2021) (NTS0205)



Public transport is provided in the context of substantially increases in car ownership over the last two generations. Nationally households without a car have fallen from 48 percent to 22 percent over the last 50 years and those with two or more cars has risen from 8 percent to 33 percent over the same period. (National travel survey 2021).

The 2021 census shows that Tendring has similar car ownership to the national trend, with 20 percent without a car. The data is available at a very local level, which shows great variability in the rate of car ownership by households. For example, about half the households in Brooklands and Grasslands in Jaywick Sands have a car or van. In the rural villages, it varies between about 90 and 95 percent of households have a car.

Within the towns, there is a mixed picture. For example in Clacton town centres about 35 percent of residents have a car, whereas in Holland-on-Sea it is 80-85 percent with a car or van. It is similarly diverse in Harwich and in Walton, with households in some neighbourhoods with only 55-60% accessing a car or van, and in others, it is nearer 90%.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

APPENDICES

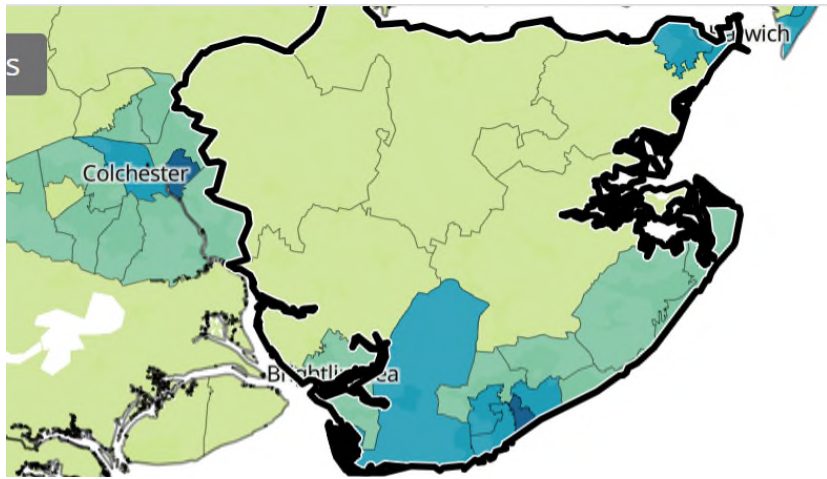
- Car ownership in Tendring
- Rail services
- Hedingham Bus network
- Community Transport Hospital Hopper

REPORT CONTACT OFFICER(S)

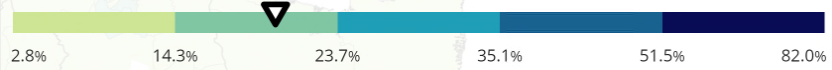
Name	Lee Heley
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Car ownership in Tendring, ONS Census 2021

[Number of cars or vans - Census Maps, ONS](#)



20.1% of households in Tendring **LAD** have no cars or vans



Hedingham Bus Network from Tendring



Hedingham Clacton Bus network



Tendring Community Transport Services

Hospital Hopper

Start Time	06:15	09:00	11:00	14:00	
Picking up in Holland on Sea, Clacton,					
Great Clacton, Jaywick, St Osyth,					
Great Bentley.					
To Arrive At					
St Helena Hospice, Barncroft Close,	07:00	09:45	11:45	14:45	
Colchester General Hospital Turner Road,	07:05	09:50	11:50	14:50	
The Oaks, Mile End Road.	07:15	10:05	12:05	15:05	
All other medical centres on request.					
Return Time					
The Oaks Hospital, Mile End Road,		10:05	13:00	15:15	17:00
Colchester General Hospital Turner Road,		10:10	13:05	15:20	17:05
Primary Care Centre		10:15	13:10	15:25	17:10
St Helena Hospice, Barncroft Close.		10:20	13:15	15:30	17:15