

**Meeting between Parish Councils, Suffolk County Council and Chambers Buses.
The Mill Hotel, Sudbury 27/1/20.**

Present:

Jeremy Cooper (JC)	CEO of Go East Anglia – Owners of Chambers Buses
Mary George (MG)	Chair of Nayland & Wissington Parish Council
Stephanie Bezencenet (SB)	Chair of Stoke by Nayland Parish Council
Ian Jordon (IB)	Parish Councillor, Assington
Rose Symonds (RS)	Parish Councillor, Assington
James Finch (JF)	Suffolk County Councillor - The Stour Valley Division
Simon Barnett (SLB)	Passenger Transport Development Manager, Suffolk County Council

The meeting was chaired by James Finch.

Apologies were received from Simon Thorogood – Chairman of Assington Parish Council.

JC gave an explanation of background to the current situation. Go Ahead group purchased Chambers, Hedingham, Konect and Anglian Bus at the same time and brought them under a single management. Both Anglian and Chambers were losing money, Anglian has been merged into Konect and no longer exists. The intention is to retain Chambers as a brand but the work covered needs to be reviewed. The company has lost some work through SCC school travel policy changes.

Summary of points raised by the attendees and Jeremy Cooper’s responses:

Issue	Response	Actions
All recognised that the company cannot sustain losses. How can this be changed?	Use of services (and therefore income) needs to increase as well as reducing costs. Sudbury depot is losing money but Go Ahead would like to keep it open. Majority of passengers are end to end and streamlining the timetable to give them a faster route should make the route more attractive as well as enabling it to be operated with two buses rather than three. Passenger figures for the stops losing services are too low to be sustainable over the current number of journeys. The company also has issues with the road layout and inconsiderate parking in Stoke by Nayland leading to buses being damaged.	Chambers/Parishes/SCC: Promotion of revised timetable to encourage use and hopefully drive passenger numbers upwards to improve viability.

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<p>Villages having access to buses is seen as vital for the communities. Whilst numbers may be low, those who do use the buses are generally the ones with no alternative transport and reduced levels of personal mobility, making it harder for them to reach the proposed A134 stops. E.g. walking route from Assington to A134 is not safe, distance from the north end of Nayland is around a mile. Stoke by Nayland has no direct access to the A134.</p>	<p>Proposal to run one additional bus to/from Sudbury per day via Assington village.</p> <p>May also be possible to offer a regular journey from Nayland village and Stoke by Nayland to Sudbury.</p> <p>The current stops in Assington and Leavenheath (High Road) require buses to reverse which is not encouraged, and Chambers have been advised to change things by the DVSA.</p>	<p>Parishes: please supply Chambers with preferred times of travel and duration of stay in Sudbury.</p> <p>Chambers: look at variations to timetable to make these journeys.</p>
<p>Village residents should be able to travel to Colchester or Sudbury, mon-sat, without having to change bus for full or part day for education, employment, health or shopping purposes. Once per day or once per week is not enough. Lack of later bus from Sudbury is of concern. Also, if changes must happen could they be phased in as reductions rather than everything changing at once?</p>	<p>This will still be possible from the A134 stops, unfortunately numbers from within the villages are not high enough.</p> <p>Retention until July of journeys used by students attending after-school activities/workers will be considered.</p> <p>Do not want to leave the villages with no services (hence main road options) but savings are needed soon and better to have one change than many.</p>	<p>Chambers: consider evening bus plus weekends and school holidays.</p>
<p>A134 stops not perceived as safe due to lack of footway at some and difficulty in crossing the road.</p>	<p>Temporary stops will be installed in time for service changes. Usage will be monitored and if popular SCC will look to providing permanent stops.</p>	<p>Chambers: provide stop use figures regularly.</p> <p>SCC: Review numbers and seek funds for permanent improvements.</p>
<p>Funding is obviously an issue for the full service. Would an off-peak service be viable?</p>	<p>Will be tried as above. Main funding challenge is that the majority of off-peak passengers are concessionary pass holders, and the operator only receives around 1/3 of the adult fare.</p>	<p>SCC: look into options for funding to Local bus services. Unfortunately there is no section 106 money forthcoming that could be used for service provision, and CIL funds cannot be used this way.</p>
<p>All felt that the consultation period was not long enough, especially to capture the views of users without internet access.</p>	<p>Information was sent to Parishes using email addresses on web sites. Concern that this did not appear to have been received.</p>	<p>Parishes: send confirmed contact information to Chambers.</p>

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<p>Information about changes and consultation was not seen on bus, some attendees had been informed by drivers, but not all.</p>	<p>Info was distributed.</p>	<p>Chambers; Please improve Communications to passengers on the vehicles.</p>
<p>Would school journeys be linked to Essex or Suffolk terms and recognise that college and school days can differ?</p>	<p>This will be checked and incorporated in the final timetable.</p>	<p>Chambers: Confirm school and college times.</p>
<p>Health centre and inter-village travel is just as important as people going to the towns at either end.</p>	<p>Boarding points and type of tickets issued indicate that this is a very small percentage of total users.</p>	
<p>What alternatives are there?</p>	<p>Cllr Finch has been in discussions with Hadleigh Community Transport about a potential feeder to meet with service 91 to allow village residents to reach Sudbury that way. Would be able to collect from home rather than just bus stops.</p> <p>SCC are also working up a taxibus trial elsewhere in Babergh which would make use of “dead” mileage on home to school contracts. If this is successful then the concept will be expanded. Contracts to the Ryes college in Assington could be used this way.</p>	<p>SCC: Continue discussions with Hadleigh CT and potential taxibus operators.</p>