

Colchester Bus User News

HEDINGHAM IN CRISIS!

September 2016 saw the biggest outbreak of bus cancellations in Colchester since C-BUS started thirteen years ago. In the first week of September, many Hedingham buses started 'not appearing', initially without explanation. When information was provided a few days later it turned out that there had been a sudden large loss of drivers, particularly (but not only) at the Clacton depot. In addition, abnormally large numbers of drivers were 'reporting sick', making it impossible to make advance arrangements even for the next day. (We must leave it to others to pursue the question of the *real* factors behind this sudden outbreak of 'sickness' not experienced by the rest of the Clacton population!). Attempts to borrow drivers from other Go-Ahead companies / use agency drivers produced only a small result. Some supervisors and managers also did driving turns, but this was nowhere near enough to maintain the services. New recruitment advertising was stepped up, but this of course cannot produce instant results.

As operators normally do in times of difficulty, Hedingham tried to minimise cancellation on their ECC contract routes, but even these had *some* cancellations (15, 63, 82/83, etc). The bulk of the missing buses were therefore on the busiest commercial routes, the 87 and 88. The 87 was worst affected and at some times only one bus (out of four) was running; and on some days there was no evening service operating. Many passengers had 60 or 90 minute waits at stops.

C-BUS attended a meeting at the Brightlingsea Town Council offices on 26th September, where managers from the Go-Ahead regional office in Dereham came to explain the situation.

So far as the 87 was concerned, the situation was exacerbated by the fact that a completely altered timetable with altered routings began on 4th September. No new ECC timetables were put up at stops in Brightlingsea, and the new timetables put up elsewhere were all wrong, either showing the old service only or showing both the old times *and* the new, as if there were now five buses an hour! In the absence of any information (except for the timetables on the Hedingham website) many people were left quite unable to distinguish the changes



One that did appear! Hedingham are now doing driver changeovers at the Coop Bank, where they have opened a drivers' messroom.

from the new timetable from the 'changes' due to the driver shortage!

By mid-October the cancellation situation did seem to have improved considerably, with some new drivers in post.

It appears that there is now a general 'driver shortage' in the region. This puts Hedingham at a disadvantage as its pay rates have always been less than First and Arriva rates.

The new 87 service (once it starts running reliably) will provide the following new facilities:

- Through service between Brightlingsea / Wivenhoe / Uni and Barrack St / Magdalen St (for Wilson Marriage and Aldi), and Asda.
- Restoration of the through service between Brightlingsea and North Station that long applied in First 78 days.
- Through service between Barrack St / Magdalen St and North Station.
- People from elsewhere in south Colchester can change at Head St to access Asda, instead of the anti-pedestrian walk from the North Station layby stops.
- People in west Brightlingsea get a faster direct service to Colchester as well as *from* Colchester.

It is a pity that the attempt at a 20min frequency for Brightlingsea did not receive enough public support. The main reason for this must surely be the great number of other buses now serving Wivenhoe (on the back of the University traffic) leaving the 87 largely reliant on Brightlingsea/ Alresford traffic.

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FIRST AUGUST CHANGES BEST EVER 67 SERVICE

The most beneficial thing in this round of changes (full details of which are given at p.7) is the completely new 67 timetable. This throws out the anti-passenger 67 changes of November 2015, under which Blackheath / Abberton / West Mersea passengers were sacrificed to an anti-Arriva agenda: but it goes further than that, by bringing in the best West Mersea service of recent times, with *three* buses an hour for seven hours a day on weekdays (one 67, one 67a, and one via the main road as 67d).

It also improves the service to the Lethe Grove stops serving the new developments off Berechurch Hall Road, now every 20/30 mins in the daytime plus an hourly evening 68.

The other main 'expansionist' change is the extension of the Sunday 61 service to run between North Station and Wivenhoe. With the completion of the new 'Maltings' student accommodation in Haven Road, larger numbers of Uni students are now using the 61.

Also an additional vehicle has been put onto the 65 in the evening peak, in hopes of reducing the worse 65 running since November 2015. (This is the vehicle used for the extra 67s during the middle of the day).

The only 'weird' change this time is the alteration of the 88 timetable so that all buses from Halstead in the middle of the day are registered to 'terminate' at Head St, and then immediately 'start' from Head St for Halstead. This is so that they can pick up for Halstead in the High St (stop GC). However as Heddingham have been advertising such a facility for a long while now without any public interest, it is difficult to see that First will achieve anything from it either. Moreover it results in the published timetables now giving the impression that one *has* to get off incoming buses in Head St! when they actually all continue to the Bus Station, thus making the service look *worse* (albeit that *most* passengers have always got off in Head St anyway).

LEXDEN ROAD: PUBLIC ENFORCES SENSIBLE SCHEME AFTER ECC FAILURE

. We referred in a previous Newsletter to the promised (or threatened!) ECC scheme for a 'shared space' pavement along most of the length of Lexden Road, bringing a more anti-pedestrian and anti-cyclist environment, all in the name of introducing an (inbound) bus lane on a road where buses are never actually held up by traffic, outside of the school rush times.

After the usual lengthy silence, it was announced (with only a few days' notice) that a public consultation exhibition was going to be held on 13th June. This revealed proposals such as one now expects from an ECC Highways organisation that refuses to learn anything from anybody until *after* a scheme has already been drawn up! Cyclists were to be forced to ride on the south side pavement, in *both* directions, mixed up with pedestrians, and the three new traffic lanes would be only 3m wide at many points (so pity anyone in the middle lane squashed between two passing buses!).

There was not even any indication that ECC understood the difference between the school congestion periods (much of it *caused* by buses) and the free-flowing (indeed, often empty) road of the rest of the day. When people pointed out that there were *no* traffic problems most of the time, ECC starting claiming that the scheme, although not currently necessary, had to be done for *future* traffic levels arising from further housing developments to the west. (This is itself a nonsense as the 'pinch point' in this corridor is the Straight Road / Halstead Road junctions, which cannot be greatly improved: not Lexden Road itself).

The plans produced revolt amongst Lexden Road inhabitants at the prospect of seeing this currently attractive road-scape despoiled, and an unusual outbreak of unanimity amongst everyone else in Colchester, including CBC making a formal objection to the scheme. And only a few weeks later on 11th July, ECC announced that the whole scheme was to be abandoned, apart from a few sensible elements such as further parking restrictions between Lexden Church and the Crown, where buses are often brought to a standstill currently.

rently.

A detailed C-BUS submission had been sent to the engineers in charge of the scheme in summer 2015, explaining how the real problems are schooltime-only and how they might be reduced, but this was completely ignored.

New ECC plans for a revised solution of smaller works were published on 11th July. These include several half-width bus stop laybys where buses could pick up at school times with other traffic free to pass them. However there is no sign that any discussion has taken place with the bus operators as to exactly *which* buses are supposed to use these rather than the normal stopping points! Many of the buses are ECC school contract journeys which ought to make it easier to clarify such details, or would if Highways and other parts of ECC spoke to each other!

So once again large numbers of the public have had to waste many hours of their time opposing a scheme, to make up for ECC's lack of internal intelligence. And how much money has been spent on preparing the scheme over the last few years, only to see it immediately abandoned as soon as it hits the light of day?

Also, this scheme has again brought the words 'bus lane' into disrepute.

The most important point though is the way in which this scheme has again revealed the whole crazy ill-informed manner in which Highways now go about scheme progressing. Funding for schemes is now controlled by the undemocratic SELEP (South East Local Economic Partnership), to which Counties now have to submit packages of road schemes, bunged together to meet SELEP deadlines. SELEP then approves them (or not), without of course having the slightest knowledge of whether they relate to *real* problems.

But now that ECC has been forced to instantly abandon a SELEP-funded scheme, its credibility with them must surely have gone down somewhat....

ECC EVENING COUNTRY ROUTES CONSULTATION

It will be remembered that certain ECC-supported services were left out of the main Bus Review in 2015 because the existing contracts did not expire until 2017. A separate consultation was conducted in September for these routes which, so far as Colchester is concerned, are:

70 weekday evenings

71 Sundays

75 weekday evenings

88 Sundays.

The ECC proposal was to:

Withdraw all 70 evening services, on the grounds that the 133 gave an alternative service for Braintree-Colchester passengers. (This rationale was immediately scuppered by Arriva registering the withdrawal of the 133!).

Withdraw the *evening* 71 journeys on Sundays.

Withdraw one evening 75 journey each way.

Withdraw the *evening* 88 journeys on Sundays.

We immediately pointed out that it is hardly surprising that the 70 and 75 weekday evening services have been making a big loss, given that much of the ECC buses' time is spent pointlessly duplicating commercial journeys! In the case of the 70 the bus spends 2hr 30 mins on pointless journeys and only 1hr 55 mins on useful journeys. This has all been going on for ages but we are given to understand that under the contract Regal were entitled to refuse any alteration of the timings to something useful.

As we are not well-informed generally on the usage level of late evening services, it was decided to do weekday and Sunday 2000-2300 surveys, which were conducted on 21st and 28th August. ALL 70, 71, 75 and 88 journeys were surveyed (except a few that were missed), with the following results. Inwards buses were seen at Headgate, outward buses at Crouch St. (* = the journeys that ECC seek to withdraw).

WEDNESDAY

70 (Regal) All journeys cancelled *

71a (First) In 1955 on time 1 on
 Out 2012 3 late 0 on
 In 2101 4 early 3 on
 Out 2120 3 late 4 on
 In 2202 8 late 4 on
 Out 2213 6 late 1 on
 In 2306 1 late n/k

75 (Regal) Out 2002 on time 8 on
 In 2046 6 early 3 on
 Out 2102 on time 10 on
 In 2246 6 early n/k *
 Out 2301 1 early 4 on *

88 (First) Out 2042 on time 11 on
 Out 2242 on time n/k

SUNDAY

70 (First) In 2014 1 early 3 on
 Out 2102 on time 3 on
 In 2211 4 early 1 on
 71c (Regal) Out 2014 2 late 0 on *
 In 2155 5 early 1 on *
 Out 2212 on time 1 on *
 75 (First) In 2100 on time 1 on
 Out 2112 on time 3 on
 88 (Regal) In 2008 6 early 3 on *
 Out 2053 3 late 5 on *
 In 2207 7 early 2 on *
 Out 2250 on time 0 on *

Particularly striking is the very poor usage of the recently-improved weekday 71a evening service. We have therefore suggested that this bus run instead from Colchester to Tiptree and back at 2000 and 2200, removing the need for a separate 75 bus.

One cannot argue with the withdrawing of the three 71c Sunday journeys either, with such poor loadings.

With regard to the 88 Sundays, we have asked for analysis of the 2048 outward bus, which could actually run at 2018 instead to save money.

There has always been a suspicion that some Sunday evening buses are not really justified - although in our criticism of ECC's habit of insisting that Sunday buses must run at the same frequency all day, we have tended to concentrate more on the need for MORE buses during shopping hours!

It is of course no new thing to do a survey at an unusual time and find that some of the buses don't actually turn up. It is also hardly likely that the Wednesday survey night will be the *only* night on which Regal journeys are all cancelled due to vehicle breakdown. Note also that ALL the Regal inwards journeys on all routes ran 5 mins or more early, making them useless for any passengers who might have wanted to board at the Colchester end of the route. Again this is something that has been seen before with previous evening sightings, but which ECC fails to deal with.

This must all act as a significant put-off factor, offering further explanation of low loadings.

The 70 actually needs only *one* journey in each direction after the commercial service ends, at c.2100 from Braintree and c.2200 from Colchester. It is difficult to believe that a service which runs at 20 or 30 min intervals in the daytime can really not justify any evening buses at all (at least if they were run in a reliable manner).

Evening buses can however never be anything other than big lossmakers so long as ECC lets operators get paid twice over for returns, whilst taking nothing for itself.

ARRIVA OCTOBER CHANGES: MORE SUNDAY BUSES, END OF 133

These are generally constructive (in a 'way forward to a more sensible future' sense), including:

- Putting an extra vehicle on the 1 in the late afternoon Mon-Fri in an attempt to reduce this route's famous late running / bunching. Buses will now have 80 mins to do the circuit at this time instead of 70 mins.

- Putting an extra vehicle on the 8 on Saturdays to improve punctuality in the busy part of the day with longer lay-overs.

[But in another sense changes like this are not good news at all because it means extra costs incurred to carry the same number of people = higher fares needed].

- Abandoning the scarcely-used section of the 2 between Tesco and Gavin Way. Buses will instead revert to running via Eastwood Drive, where passengers have been annoyed by the reduced and less reliable 65 service since November 2015.

- Improved Sunday daytime 8 service, every 30 mins on the full route between Monkwick and Highwoods. This also takes the Highwoods - town centre Sunday daytime service up to 6 buses an hour.

- Improved Sunday daytime 1/1a service, through the addition of two Arriva commercial 1 journeys between Ambrose Avenue and Hamlet Drive, making four buses an hour in total. Probably rather overoptimistic, particularly so far as the Ambrose Avenue leg is concerned! However when the ECC / First contract for the existing 1a journeys ends in April 2018, ECC may well be glad to end its supported journeys on the

basis that a 30 min service is enough.

The withdrawing (almost!) of our end of the 133 is obviously not a positive thing per se, but it has long been obvious that one of the two Stansted routes would have to fail, and the 250 was clearly the stronger once the 133 was cut in frequency as well as exposing airport passengers to the grind via rustic roads west of Braintree. The 250 should now benefit from increased usage, helping it to establish itself more firmly, using the extra Heathrow and Ipswich traffic to get round the old problem that there is just not enough population in NE Essex to make a frequent Stansted-only service viable. University students at the start and end of term will not be amused to lose their direct service, of course.

The 2 is being reduced from 15 to 20 min frequency between 1530 and 1800 Mon-Fri, also all day Saturday when usage is lower. (This is where the extra vehicles for the 1 and 8 are coming from). At the moment a lot of small buses are being used on the 2 and this will surely have to be ended on weekday afternoons now?

The remaining two commercial Boxted journeys (0745 in, 1740 back) are being withdrawn. Discussions are in progress with Panther to make up for this by diverting 80/81 journeys at this time. That would get Boxted on a single route instead of the middle of different routes which have made things there 'difficult' until recently. The Park & Ride has not helped as some Boxted people have been abstracted to that.

PARK & RIDE 'INCOME' FIGURES ARE 'DOCTORED'!

In July Freedom of Information requests were made to ECC asking how many paying users there had been on the Colchester P&R since its launch, and what income had been generated. Unfortunately the figures given in reply for the period prior to the introduction of standard fares in November 2015 were incomprehensible - however there is no longer any real point now in arguing over what happened in those early free/cheap months, and we must concentrate on the figures since November.

According to the ECC figures, the number of *farepaying* passengers remained steady at around 3,000 per month from November 2015 to June 2016 (save for a pre-Christmas spike to 5,300 in December, which is fairly normal for P&Rs). The April-June 2016 usage figures also look 'odd', though; so we will use the January-March figures as the basis for analysis. In those three months the total number of *paying* users is given as 8,707, and it is claimed that this produced an income of £42,738. But that = an average of £4.90 per farepaying passenger, even though nobody pays more than £3.00! and in fact many will be paying less than that (season ticket holders and children). So clearly 'something is up'. The real income for the three months cannot have been much more than around £22,000 (average £2.55). This would make the current real *annual* income about £90,000, only about 12% of the annual operating costs figure given by ECC; not the approx. £175,000 implied by ECC.

So what is it all about? The initial suspicion was that the 'income' figure quoted must actually be including as 'income' the money which one part of ECC transfers to

another part of ECC as 'payment' for the carrying of non-farepaying users (passholders). And indeed, further study of the figures for the Chelmsford P&Rs has confirmed that this is the case.

ECC might say that they are merely treating the P&R in the same way as they treat other ECC supported services from an *accounting* viewpoint. But they were asked what the actual income was!



ECC's highly-paid consultants have now had eighteen months to sort out the new telematics screen in Head St to perform the decidedly simple task of telling people clearly when the next P&R bus is. This is their latest effort (the top line is a P&R bus). The previous week it was saying 'COLCH COLCH P'!

IPSWICH P&R BUSES TO BE ABANDONED

Further evidence that Park&Ride is not some sort of 'magic success' medicine that can be applied to every town irrespective of local circumstances (as most Councillors and local government planners all over the UK seem to believe), is now emerging from Ipswich. We reported in the last Newsletter how Suffolk County Council was engaged in a radical re-examination of the two remaining Ipswich P&R services in order to eliminate the deficit. (The coming of 'hard times' is even starting to affect the established local authority enthusiasm for heavy subsidising of P&Rs!).

The resulting report was approved by the June 2016 SCC Cabinet meeting, and is to be put into force early in 2017.

The P&R bus routes are to be abandoned as such. Instead the two sites will be served by the extension / diversion of existing ordinary bus routes, Martlesham by First on a 15-min frequency and London Road by Ipswich Buses on a 6-min frequency. In the latter case it is hoped that users will see the enhanced frequency as making up for the longer journey time. However, a package of junction / traffic signal improvements is to be included to help bus running. (Yes, just as in Colchester, reducing delays to real buses only becomes a priority if *motorist* bus passengers are about!).

It is also intended to sell off parts of the sites (as they are never full) and close the terminal buildings.

By this means SCC will cease to be involved with the operation of the bus services, largely eliminating the deficit. Their only remaining job will be basic maintenance of the site car parks.

Having 'P&R' passengers travelling on ordinary buses is in principle a very sensible change, because it strengthens these services for the benefit of everybody, whereas separate P&R buses can only abstract some passengers from real buses. It will however be interesting to see how Ipswich P&R users will react to their new 'less privileged' situation! They are promised that the £2.50 fare will be retained (which one suspects may involve the invidious practice of charging motorist passengers *less* than what other passengers have to pay for *shorter* journeys on the same route).

The decline of the Ipswich P&R has been caused principally by the large amount of cheap all-day parking started up on derelict sites in inner Ipswich (not a situation that exists in Colchester). Nevertheless the manner chosen for resolving the situation could well be adoptable for Cuckoo Farm (extension of the underused 2?).

CBC PLANS FUTURE CONGESTION

The new Colchester Borough Council 'Local Plan' now slowly progressing through the system was expected to incorporate the building of a so-called 'garden community' (= massive housing development), to be located *either* west of Marks Tey *or* in the area between the A133 and A120 east of Greenstead. In the event CBC are now seeking to build BOTH of them! 'West' would grow to 20,000 houses and 'East' to 9,000.

Needless to say, we are assured as usual that all this will be quite OK because most of the new inhabitants will travel by bus, bicycle and foot, instead of being far *more* car-dependent than the average Colchester citizen, like the new residents in other recent Colchester housing developments have turned out to be.

The 'West' development is recognised as requiring improvements to the A12 and the A120, but nothing is said about what is supposed to happen to all the extra cars when they pour off the A12 at the Colchester junctions!

More talk is engaged in as to the transport improvements needed for the 'East' development. The 'East Colchester Rail Transit Route' is rolled out again as the salvation: this (despite its name) is not a rail route, but a busway to be built (at no small cost) directly alongside the railway from the Magistrates' Court to Hythe Station Road crossing. After reaching the latter point, it continues on the proposals map as a much vaguer 'East Colchester Transit Route' which, after magically passing through the middle of Greenstead roundabout without difficulties, takes a long diversion through the University grounds before somehow crossing over the A133 and entering the new development. Every attempt is made to convince the more

naïve reader that this is going to be some sort of light rail / tram system!

As further strings to the bow, consultants are now using up your money to study alternative ideas for a bus priority corridor along Greenstead Road (scarcely credible, and involving the high-speed buses sitting waiting for the East Gates barriers to come up), or one via the previously-aided new busway between Recreation Road and the Colne Causeway / Haven Road roundabout (at which point the buses would be left to the mercies of the Colne Causeway congestion, the same as other traffic). Also in the weaponry is a new main road between the A133 west of Elmstead Market and the A120. That would certainly help some of the new residents (and Wivenhoe motorists) to reach the A12 and the rest of the country faster (= more easily lead car-centred lifestyles), but it would do nothing to help people in the new 'community' get into Colchester, as the only alternative route into town that it would give access to would be the famously-congested Ipswich Road / East St corridor.

The general aim of all this talk is to create an impression that, as there are so many things that *might* be done, everything must surely be alright; and to distract attention away from the fact that there is no evidence that *any* of the alternatives might actually work!

Also pushed into the plan again is the CBC East Colchester Park & Ride scheme (struck out in the previous Local Plan round for lacking any rational evidence base). In view of the outcome of Cuckoo Farm, it is now of course possessed of even less credibility! But little things like that will not stop CBC from its devotions to unreality.

88 SERVICE TO BE MADE 'JOINT' BY ECC QBP AGREEMENT

For a long time we have felt that the 88 service was being held back in usage terms by the considerable nuisance caused to farepaying passengers by the non-interavailability of return tickets and period passes, meaning that most farepayers effectively have only half the service frequency that free passholders enjoy. Of course this situation applies on many other roads too, but this has always been the most annoying case of it locally.

Essex County Council has now used its powers to bring in a Quality Bus Partnership agreement — we haven't heard much about *them* in the last few years! -- which extends also to ticket interavailability, overriding the normal post-1986 competition laws that prevent operators collaborating on fares matters. This came into effect early in October although the official 'launch' of it will not be until 30th October. In the terminology of older pre-Thatcher bus users, it is now effectively to be a 'joint' service!

The Agreement however extends to many other things as well.

- Alignment of fare stage points between First and Heddingham.
- Limitation on the number of times that fares will be altered each year.
- Supporting full integrated ticketing and smartcards.

(But the fares themselves will *not* be made the same).

- Analysis of each operator's scheduled journey times with a view to introducing standardised schedules.
- Analysis of the bus stop infrastructure along the route and identification of potential sources of funding for improvements.
- Review of passenger usage data for all stops to determine which are the most-used stops to be prioritised for improvement.
- Common standards for vehicle quality and driver training.

- Signing of a Qualifying Agreement which is a legal requirement before any discussion can take place between the operators on the integration of timetables.

It is hoped that this will all encourage greater usage and potential 'modal shift' (bus journey times on this route are not much less than by car).

** If it were not for the unfortunate fact of Colchester having far too many employer free parking spaces to make any sort of P&R workable, this route would be a good one for trying to introduce a 'sensible' Park & Ride facility with several small car parks at selected points along the route (as if it were a railway line with stations), instead of the established UK system under which motorists all drive one behind the other for a long distance to an urban-fringe giant P&R site, and only travel on a bus for the last 2-3 miles. The perceived 'problem' preventing this much 'greener' sort of P&R has always been that motorists see their car travel as 'costing nothing' and would resent having to pay a bus fare more than £3 or so.

We are grateful to Mark Glenister of ECC Passenger Transport, who has been principally involved in the negotiations, for proving information on the agreement, which represents a significant achievement for ECC.

ON THE STREETS

Messages are rarely displayed at the Bus Station, and even more rarely are they of practical value. We featured in a previous Newsletter one that was in tiny lettering positioned right at the top of the screen so that only 7ft tall people with AI sight could read it. However the size problem seems to have been cured now, judging by this one that appeared in early August. The trouble is that it is complete nonsense. We know that they are landlubbers in Chelmsford of course, but surely even chronic landlubbers can be expected to know that the tide does not stay in *all day* every day for a month? (Or was it meant to mean that the first bus in the morning was to be cancelled every day?). Despite their having been notified of the nonsense content, it remained up for the rest of the month...



RECENT AND FORTHCOMING SERVICE CHANGES

First changes 24.7.2016

- 70 minor retimings to some Mon-Fri journeys.
- 71 evening ECC 71a journeys Mon-Sat altered.

Hedingham changes 26.7.2016

92 Mon-Fri commercial service withdrawn, replaced by new ECC-supported journeys (operated by Hedingham) at different times. No change to Saturday 92 times. No change to Layer / Tollesbury 50 journeys.

First changes 28.8.2016

61 Last buses from Wivenhoe on Sat evenings retimed. Completely revised Sunday service, running every 30 mins between North Station forecourt and Wivenhoe Coop. From North Station 1110 to 1910, from Queen St 1025 to 1925. From Wivenhoe 1057 to 1957. Together with 62 this gives four buses an hour Sun daytime between North Station and Wivenhoe.

62 Minor retiming of some early evening journeys Mon-Fri and Sat.

64/a Additional late 64 journey Head St to Greenstead 2330 Mon-Fri and Sat. Additional Sat 64a journey 1722 Head St to Greenstead. Completely altered Sunday daytime service. Between Greenstead and town centre every 20 mins (instead of 15), 64 and 64a alternately. All buses continue to St Michaels (every 40 mins) and Shrub End (every 40 mins), giving improved 20 min interval on Layer Road (instead of 30).

65 Journeys from Highwoods retimed 1630-2100 Mon-Fri and 2000-2100 Sats. No change to times from Stanway.

67 Completely altered Mon-Fri and Sat services. Three buses an hour between West Mersea and town centre 08xx-15xx; the extra third bus runs via main road as 67d. No Monkwick-only buses. All buses run via Lethe Grove stops. Layover point in town changed from Head St to High St Coop Bank stop FB. Passengers are now allowed to board at FB again. *Most* buses only wait three minutes at FB so it is still possible to board for West Mersea in St Johns St and Head St, however *some* do have a long wait at FB. Norman Way school buses renumbered 67c and no long run from/to East Mersea.

68 Rerouted to serve Lethe Grove stops. Buses from Colchester still run via Gosfield Rd after Lethe Grove, but buses from West Mersea now follow 67 route. Additional 68 journey 1855 from Highwoods Mon-Fri / 1905 from Hospital Sat, replacing former 1910 from North Station forecourt. 2250 from Highwoods extended from Abberton to Fingringhoe.

75 1710 from Uni Mon-Fri runs 5 mins earlier.

88 Middle of day buses from Halstead now 'terminate' at Head St, and after 3 mins wait there, pick up at High St stop GC for Halstead prior to Bus Station.

Hedingham changes 4.9.2016

87 Completely altered timetable and route. All buses now run between Asda/North Station laybys and Brightlingsea Regent Road. Mon-Fri and Sat daytime services now every 30 mins (instead of 20). Revised route in Colchester via Hythe Station Road / Barrack St / Magdalen St in both directions, instead of Greenstead Road / East Hill. Buses towards Brightlingsea pick up at Bus Station stop AE after High St. Revised route in Brightlingsea; all buses now terminate at Regent Road and return from there to Colchester via Victoria Place (instead of 'loop'). Sunday evening buses withdrawn (last buses now 1822 from Brightlingsea / 1930 from Asda).

(Further change from 19.10.2016: additional Mon-Fri journeys 0552 from Brightlingsea / 0645 from Asda).

Ipswich Buses changes 4.9.2016

93/94 Revised timetable. 0820 to 1520 from Colchester all run 5 mins earlier. 1005/1205/1305/1405 from Ipswich all run 5 mins earlier. Many buses run 5 mins earlier from East Bergholt into Colchester. More buses now run direct via A12 between East Bergholt and Capel St Mary, instead of via Holton St Mary and Great Wenham, with reductions in journey time.

First changes 3.10.2016

102/103/104 (Temporary) Minor changes to times in connection with roadworks closures near Wix (for about 4 months).

Arriva changes from 30.10.2016

Revised times up to 0900 and 1500-1900 Mon-Fri, up to 0900 and 1700-1900 Sats. Additional Sunday daytime 1 (Hamlet

Drive) journeys every 30 mins 09xx-18xx, making a 15-min interval on the main part of the route in combination with the ECC/ First 1a journeys.

2 Altered route at Highwoods end - buses will run via Eastwood Drive and terminate at Tesco. No bus service for Gavin Way. After 1500 Mon-Fri, and all day Sats, the daytime service will run at 20 min instead of 15 min frequency. Boxted journeys withdrawn.

8 Revised Mon-Fri and Sat timetables. Improved Sunday daytime services, running every 30 mins over the full route Monkwick/ Highwoods. From Monkwick 0921 to 1721 / Head St 0937 to 1737. From Highwoods 0907 to 1707 / High St 0931 to 1731.

133 University - Colchester - Braintree section of route withdrawn, except for two journeys each way daily at 0220 and 0520 from Bus Station / 0015 and 1830 (1815 Sat-Sun) from Stansted. Not calling North Station.

ECC/Panther changes 31.10.2016

80/81 Revised timetables to improve punctuality. Inwards buses will set down in Turner Road for Hospital, not Main Entrance.

HIGH STREET CLOSURES

Sunday 30th October ALL DAY for CBC Family Fun event.

Sunday 13th November Remembrance Sunday. 0800-c.1200, East Hill and Queen St also closed.

Sunday 20th November 1430-1700 for Santa Claus / Christmas lights.

(At the time of writing no application has been received for a Winter / Christmas Fair)

TELEMATICS

At the start of October, without publicity, a lot of First buses started appearing on the (old) telematics screens in 'real time' at last! So far, however, this has not come through into the Bus Station screens and the 'pods', which are worked on a separate system.

SAINSBURY'S FORCED TO GRANT A LITTLE TO GREENSTEAD

When the second planning application from Sainsburys for the new Hythe store came up this summer, it came to our notice that the condition requiring the subsidised extended hours of the 61 (to run until the store's closing time) was out of date / unclear; it had been written when the 61 ran from North Station only, but the wording seemed to imply that the full route from Highwoods would now have to get Sainsburys-supported evening buses. This opened up again the whole question of what supported bus services there ought to be, and the absence of any intended Greenstead buses for shoppers and staff. Thanks to Cllr Julie Young being able to make it to the Planning Committee meeting at no notice, this brought about an instruction to officers to reconsider, which ended up with a Greenstead service being added (albeit only during 'Senior Citizen hours').

That is, if the new store *does* ever actually materialise!

NEXT MEMBERS' MEETING (AGM)
Thursday 24th November 2016 1400hrs

At the Friends Meeting House Church St as usual (downstairs)