

Cam Vale Bus Users Group

The Limes, Bassingbourn, 17 July 2017, 7:30PM

Draft Minutes

Present: Susan van de Ven (County Councillor, Bassingbourn, Whaddon, Meldreth and Melbourn), Lee Ginger (Chairman, Whaddon Parish Council), David Wherell (Royston and District Community Transport), Jane and Jim Eggleton, Jacky Clark, Denise Permaine, Linda Permaine, Hermione Edwards, Karen Bartlett, Justin Johnson, Greg Powell, N Powell, Pat Piggott, Ann Mills, Jen Wallis, Eloise Mills, Clive Flack, Clare Greenland, Sue Chandler, Tessa Storey.

Apologies: Mayor James Palmer, John Simpson, Heather Place, Rosemary Childerley

1. Background:

The meeting had been advertised in village newsletters.

This is the only bus users group in the area that we are aware of. The immediate reason for setting up the group is the lack of public transport to Cambridge for post-16 students from September, due to Stagecoach's imminent withdrawal of the 27 bus. There is also a longer-term concern about the likely ending of subsidy for the 127/128 service in a year's time due to County Council cuts for subsidized services.

The overall public transport situation in South Cambridgeshire is rapidly deteriorating due to commercial operators withdrawing bus services for commercial reasons, and the County Council withdrawing funding from non-commercial 'subsidized bus services' that it has traditionally supported, due to budget cuts.

Discussion on incorporating the Mordens and Litlington area into the group: Susan reported that she had sent information on tonight's meeting to the Mordens and Litlington via the County Councillor, who in turn had provided it to parish councils. Localized transport work would need to be taken up by local elected representatives in the area.

Further background information as set out on the agenda was discussed: the new mayor's new bus franchising powers, and discussion with post-16 centres on lack of transport support for students from outlying areas – a growing problem.

2. Royston and District Community Transport post-16 education shuttle - Bassingbourn and Whaddon to Meldreth Station:

This idea for a service commencing in September had been floated via parish newsletters in Bassingbourn and Whaddon. There was strong interest already – approximately 20 expressions of interest for RDCT's 16-seater minibus.

Train times: Looking at dropping off for the 7:43 train from Meldreth as opposed to the 8:10. The return pick-up time of 17:10 was probably right but RDCT would need to check on vehicle availability. Agreed to a morning collection point near the Limes Bassingbourn to avoid High Street peak time congestion, and possibly Tower Close, Kneesworth, Whaddon Village Hall. RDCT will communicate with all those who'd been in touch about the proposed shuttle service. If sufficient demand, a second smaller vehicle could be added alongside the 16-seater. The service would need to charge to cover costs, probably around £3.55 per return journey.

All to help spread the word that RDCT would benefit from more drivers based in Bassingbourn and Whaddon. Parish council contributions to RDCT help make the service viable. A paid driver will need to be recruited to provide a guaranteed service, and someone will need to be hired to coordinate the service.

Another parish newsletter blurb for September 1st would be helpful to get the word out about the post-16 shuttle to anyone who might have missed it. Susan to action.

3. New operator for 127/128 and timetable tweaks:

The contract for the current service had been retendered, and a new timetable consulted upon. Changeover to the new operator and tweaked timetable was due July 31. Susan had checked with County Council ahead of tonight's meeting; a contract had been offered but the operator had not yet confirmed, so no news to bring to the meeting.

From the floor, Cozy's who currently operate the 127/128, introduced themselves and indicated uncertainty about the future of the service, due to questions about the viability of the new operator about which they claimed to have information. Contractual information is confidential but Susan to make further inquiries at County Council.

Since the meeting: Susan contacted County Council who could not comment on contractual information because it is confidential, but seemed to challenge Cozy's portrayal of the situation. Nevertheless the question remains, if there is any doubt about the viability of the new operator, what contingency plan is in place for all those people who rely on the 127/128 bus service when Cozy's stop operating at the end of July? If there is reason to be concerned, then the council needs to be anticipating with a Plan B. Susan has asked Royston and District Community Transport what kind of back-up service they might be able to provide, understanding that community transport can't simply replace bus services.

4. Constitution:

The draft constitution as presented to the meeting was agreed unanimously. Meetings to be held quarterly. It was agreed that for the time being there was no need to open a bank account and the group should be run as simply as possible. A request will be made to respective parish councils for covering the cost of room hire.

5. The following roles were elected unanimously:

Treasurer Clare Greenland, Secretary Pat Piggott, Chair Susan van de Ven. Clive Flack offered to set up and run social media (Facebook).

6. RDCT and Susan would liaise on the post-16 minibus, and update the Group on news of the 127/128 service.

7. Date of next meeting: to be confirmed as per quarterly agreement.

NOW CONFIRMED: 27 SEPTEMBER, 7:30PM, Elin Way Meldreth Sheltered Housing Communal Room. Lifts will need to be arranged.

8. The meeting concluded at 8:45PM.

Thanks to David Wherell Royston and District Community Transport for providing lifts in its 16-seater minibus from Meldreth to Bassingbourn for tonight's meeting.