

# CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

## COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

<b>COMMITTEE:</b>	<b>Community &amp; Environment</b>		
<b>MEETING DATE AND TIME</b>	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021</b> <b>7.00pm</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Congleton Town Hall</b>
<b>REPORT FROM</b>	<b>Jackie MacArthur, Deputy CEO, Communities and Marketing Manager</b>		
<b>AGENDA ITEM</b>	<b>18</b>		
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	<b>Feedback from the Congleton Town Council Bus Survey and Next Steps</b>		
<b>Background</b>	<p>On the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 the UK Government released a National Bus Strategy for England. This strategy sets out the vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers across England, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered.</p> <p>On the 19<sup>th</sup> of July Cheshire East Council Highways and Transportation Committee endorsed setting up an Enhanced Partnership for local buses and developing a Bus Improvement Plan in consultation with bus operators, passenger groups and other stakeholders, the initial plan will be reported to the Highways and Transport Committee in September to meet tight government deadlines.</p> <p>The Government has made £100,000 available to Cheshire East, and each Local Transport Authority, to support the development of Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP). A further paper on this will be discussed at <a href="#">Cheshire East's Transport and Highways Committee on the 21<sup>st</sup> September</a>.</p> <p>The Town Council's Integrated Transport Working Group met with the local bus provider and put forward some suggestions to Cheshire East Council in line with the Town Council's response to the Delivery Plan of the Local Transport Plan.</p> <p>According to the Cheshire East report bus use across Cheshire East has declined progressively and consistently. In 2016/17, there were approximately 4.5 bus passenger journeys per resident with bus patronage declining by 22% since 2009/10. These statistics place Cheshire East within the bottom five Local Authorities for the lowest number of passenger journeys per head and amongst the lowest number of trips per head of resident population in England.</p> <p>Cheshire East corporate documents and strategies stress the importance of an enhanced public transport and bus network for attaining key strategic objectives such as improving local transport, reducing air pollution, achieving carbon neutrality, enabling housing and employment growth, improving quality of place and protecting the environment.</p> <p>The Integrated Transport Working Group conducted an online bus survey to start gathering local opinions to share with CEC.</p>		

## Bus Survey Results

254 people responded to the online bus survey. The 94% respondents came from CW12 Congleton town areas and 6% from the surrounding parishes with the most responses (23%) from West Heath.

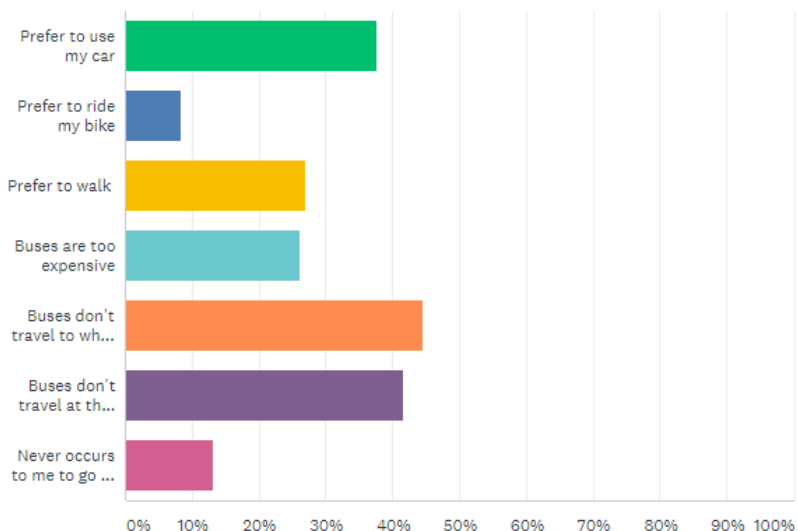
58% of the respondents were in the 26 – 59 age group, 31% in the 60 -76.

Just over half of the respondents had never been on a bus in Congleton (26%) or use a bus less than once a month (27%). 11% used the buses daily and 15% about once a week.

For the people that didn't use the bus the reasons given were:

If 'never' say why not - tick all that are relevant

Answered: 130 Skipped: 124

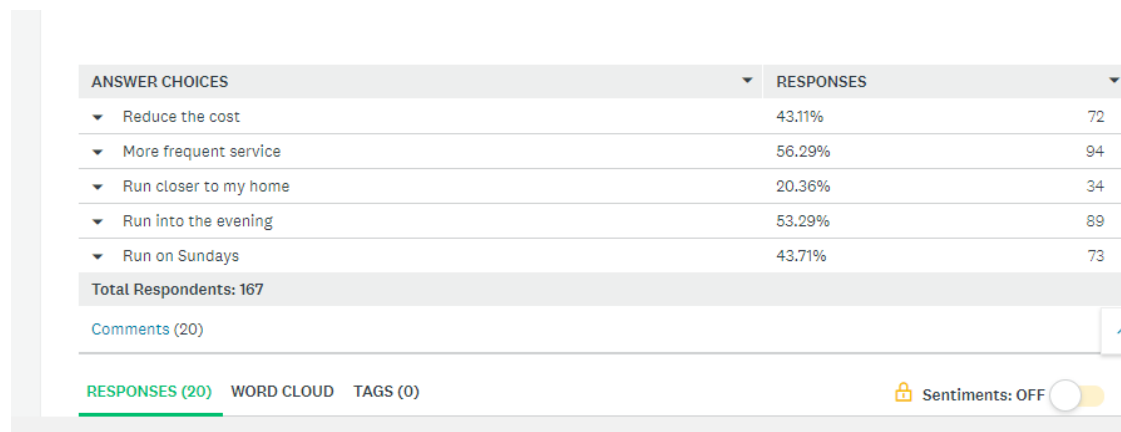


In the comments there were concerns about hygiene, methods of paying and buses not running in their area. Most people chose to walk or drive. Over half the respondents came into town more than once a week.

Interestingly **81% said that they would use a bus to travel if a bus stop was within 5 mins of their home** and buses were more frequent and reasonable.

When asked **how they usually travelled into Congleton Town Centre** 41% said by car, 38% walked, 14% by bus, 3% by bike and 1% by taxi.

When asked about why they didn't use the buses and what needed to be done to improve them responses were around



Other suggestions were around weekly or daily tickets - the Bear Buses are £1.50 per journey and drivers often don't have change and people usually make a return trip. People also wanted to see tickets that could be transferred across bus companies and downloadable or cashless payments.

There were comments that the 91 and 94 need to be more spaced out in timing and the 92 could be combined with the Macclesfield service.

People thought there was a need for buses to run to Barn Road, the business parks and Macclesfield tip

Would like to look at a more circular Congleton Bus network rather than an indirect route where everything must come into the centre first, before changing buses to get to a chosen destination.

When asked about how much people thought a trip into town by bus should cost the most common answer was £1, followed by £1.50 (which is the current fee). 50p was the 3<sup>rd</sup> most popular choice and some said up to £3.50. There were comments that with more than two people it was cheaper to get a taxi, and some parents commented on the expense for a family wishing to travel by bus.

There was a wealth of useful and thoughtful comments given by residents on their experiences on buses and ways to improve buses. The most common themes were around suggestions for additional destinations, need for tickets to be transferable, buses to train stations and Barn Road, cashless tickets, day and weekly tickets, regular (even if once a week) buses to other destinations such as Leek, Wilmslow, and a bus to Macclesfield hospital. There were also some concerns raised by families and people with disabilities. All the comments will be given to Cheshire East.

The results of the survey were consistent with the recommendations that Congleton Town Council's Integrated Transport Working Group (ITWG) had sent to and discussed with Cheshire East Council.

## Actions

Congleton Town Council needs to have conversations with Cheshire East on how the Bus Improvement Strategy Plan and the Enhanced Bus Partnership can improve bus services in Congleton and what role CEC is looking for Town and Parish Councils to take. The ITWG will continue to work with Cheshire East to improve services in Congleton and bring proposals to Committee in due course.

<b>Financial Considerations</b>	We know that Cheshire East Council's budgets are under pressure. The Town Council does not subsidise any bus services.
<b>Environmental Considerations</b>	In our business plan Congleton Town Council is committed to reducing the town's carbon footprint and improving accessibility around and to the town. The survey shows that better bus services will enable residents to make greener choices on how they travel, and that our residents are interested in doing this.
<b>Equality and Diversity Considerations</b>	Improved regular affordable bus services are vital for the whole community. They will particularly benefit the elderly, disabled and those on low incomes who do not have their own transport.
<b>Proposals</b>	That the Integrated Transport Working Group engages with Cheshire East Council on the development of the Bus Services Improvement Strategy. That all ideas given by our residents are shared with Cheshire East and we lobby for improvements in bus routes and frequencies for Congleton, then bring proposals for improvement back to the Committee for approval.