

## **150/2025 2) Love your Bus Initiative and Colchester Bus Service Consultation**

Following a query over the 88a Service through the main village it has been confirmed that the reduction in service into Colchester in the weekday morning peak was a commercial decision and that no consultation was required by First Bus before the service was axed. Ironically the best service is now on a Sunday as a result of ECC funding!

In response I have followed up with County Councillor Barber over the last few months and elicited this advice from ECC officers:

*'I would like to suggest the Love Your Bus Grant Fund, which is currently open for applications from Parish and Town Councils for projects aimed at increasing bus service patronage. Grants of up to £50,000 are available for revenue-only projects in the 2025/2026 period, supported by the Department for Transport's BSIP+ funding. Each council can submit up to three bids. Eligible projects include increasing passenger numbers, expanding service frequency or stops, marketing (e.g., leaflets, maps), and community engagement events.'*

Unfortunately, the deadline for this has passed for bids during 2025/26 but it is hoped the scheme might be rolled forward and if there is another opportunity it is proposed APC should apply. A Briefing is to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> September regarding next year that I propose to attend if the Council agree.

Separately, there is a current consultation on those Bus Services supported by ECC that runs until 27th October. However, the pro-forma only allows a response to those services that are proposed to change. This does not include any of the 88 services between Halstead and Colchester and there is therefore no scope to make representations on the 88a.

The only other opportunity to secure some improvement may be through any s106 agreements that are secured as part of future planning permissions for new housing along the route of the 88. At the moment we are aware of proposals for 680 new homes along the A1124 in Aldham, Chappel & Wakes Colne and Eight Ash Green in the Local Plan Review that was tabled in February and is awaiting formal consultation. It is possible that further development may be also be proposed for Earls Colne in any review of the Braintree Local Plan. If approved these numbers should justify measures and provide funding to improve frequency of bus service and reduce the need to travel by car.

Mike Lambert, Chair  
2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025