

Public
Key Decision - Yes

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Proposed Cambridge Congestion Charge

Meeting/Date: Overview And Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) 6th April 2022
Cabinet – 21st April 2022

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning

Report by: Strategic Growth Manager

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

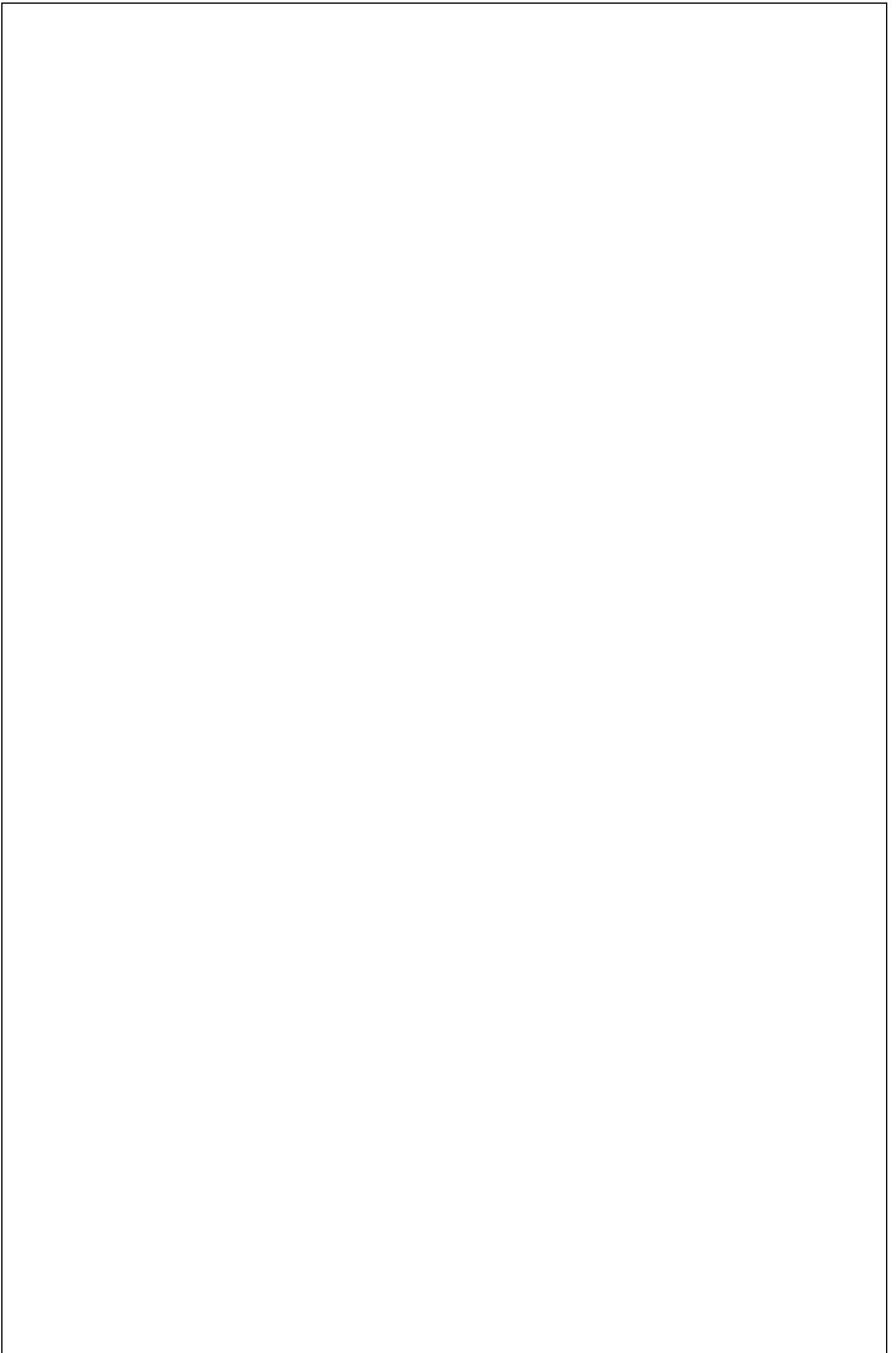
In Autumn 2021, GCP representing Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council undertook a consultation on 'Making Connections - Have Your Say on Greener Travel in Greater Cambridge'. This sought to promote significantly enhanced bus services around Greater Cambridge extending into Huntingdonshire along with walking and cycling infrastructure enhancements with the aim of reducing congestion and resultant carbon dioxide emissions and air pollution within Cambridge. Various forms of congestion charging were put forward to fund this. Consultation on the proposals ended on 20th December 2021.

GCP sees the introduction of charging as something that can benefit the wider Cambridgeshire area, including Huntingdonshire, despite the direct costs that will be incurred by some. Whilst charging drivers of motorised vehicles for trips will undoubtedly be unpopular, GCP consider it a realistic approach to raising the funding necessary for improvements to alternative travel options. However, the implications for Huntingdonshire residents who will not have easy access to the proposed transport alternatives and businesses who need to make frequent, quick trips into Cambridge has not been fully considered. Substantially more detail is required on the proposals to enable this Council to provide a robust, evidenced case in response to the next consultation stage

The Cabinet/Committee is

RECOMMENDED

To endorse the concerns raised in this report on behalf of Huntingdonshire residents and businesses, and submit a formal response to the Greater Cambridge Partnership as outlined in Appendix 2.



1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report is to draw members' attention to the potential introduction of congestion charging by the Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP). It sets out the potential issues arising for residents and businesses located in Huntingdonshire that need to travel into the city of Cambridge. It also includes a proposed letter stating the Council's current position on the introduction of congestion charging for the Cambridge area.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In Autumn 2021, GCP representing Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council undertook a consultation on 'Making Connections - Have Your Say on Greener Travel in Greater Cambridge'. This sought to promote significantly enhanced bus services around Greater Cambridge extending into Huntingdonshire along with walking and cycling infrastructure enhancements with the aim of reducing congestion and resultant carbon dioxide emissions and air pollution within Cambridge. Various forms of congestion charging were put forward to fund this. Consultation on the proposals ended on 20th December 2021.
- 2.2 The consultation sought views on the possible introduction of one of three main approaches:
- Higher car parking charges and introduction of a workplace car parking levy
 - Flexible charge – charging all private vehicles to drive within a specified area of the city, either just the city centre at approximately £10-15 per day or a larger area broadly within the five existing park and ride sites at around £5 per day
 - Pollution charge – charging vehicles to drive within a specified area unless they meet set emissions criteria
- 2.3 GCP is intending to undertake further consultation on more detailed proposals, that reflect feedback received in this consultation, later in 2022. This report seeks to inform members of the proposals specifically relating to the introduction of the flexible charge option set out in the consultation and potential impacts upon Huntingdonshire's population.

3. ANALYSIS

- 3.1 GCP proposes to use revenue from congestion charging to invest in additional public transport services, cheaper fares and improved walking and cycling routes. It sets out a route map, including key bus corridors and rural routes. Excerpts are included in Appendix A showing the routes that would directly affect Huntingdonshire.
- 3.2 The consultation acknowledges that the transformation of the bus network could cost up to £40m each year. GCP can provide some of this in the

short-term, however, the consultation paper noted that some form of charging will be needed to make the network sustainable in the future.

- 3.3 In the FAQs it notes that 'If a charge was to be introduced, public transport improvements would be made first so that people had an attractive alternative to driving'.
- 3.4 GCP acknowledges that alongside bus improvements and new walking and cycling routes, it will need to expand the options for travelling in the city and suggests this would include a large-scale roll out of electric car clubs, e-cargo bike clubs and schemes to lease e-bikes and e-cargo bikes. It suggests that these could be subsidised using money from the congestion charge to make them affordable.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

- 4.1 The comments of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel will be included in this section prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

5. KEY IMPACTS

- 5.1 Cambridge is a key travel destination for Huntingdonshire residents, particularly from the southern and eastern parts of the district, for work, education, leisure and healthcare. Whilst some parts of Huntingdonshire have good public transport connections to Cambridge, the district is a large, primarily rural area with many communities facing limited, or in some cases, no access to public transport, meaning that car travel is the only option available.
- 5.2 Up to date statistics on the numbers of people travelling to work from Huntingdonshire into Cambridge are not available. However, back in 2011 the Census showed 4,716 people travelled daily. The Guided Busway opened in August 2011 giving a more reliable public transport option for some but for more rural residents it is a less practical choice. Therefore, any proposed congestion charge could have direct implications for a significant number of residents, particularly those living in smaller villages for whom even an enhanced public transport system is still not a feasible option.
- 5.3 The primary concerns regarding the implications of the proposed congestion charge for residents and businesses in Huntingdonshire are addressed in the following paragraphs.
- 5.4 The direct cost for those travelling into the congestion charge zone will be substantial. Whilst those on higher wages may be able absorb the additional cost it would unduly penalise those on lower wages who can least afford the congestion charge but are also unable to afford to live within Cambridge. Concern is also expressed on the implications of the proposals for those with limited mobility in terms of the feasibility of changing travel modes or who have health conditions which reduce the length of time they can be outside. Furthermore, future alternative proposals must consider time taken for interchange between transport

modes to be an attractive proposition, and not rely on cost prohibitive measures alone.

- 5.5 The route maps heading into Huntingdonshire shown in the consultation material note that 'Small villages will have opportunities to 'plug in' to this network, whether that be through a regular connecting bus service, a demand responsive bus service, or access to a travel hub'. This gives rise to concerns regarding the feasibility and viability of such 'plug in' opportunities, their potential frequency and the likely overall journey durations by the time people have made multiple connections to complete the journey to their final destination. Long journey times involving multiple connections will make switching from car use unattractive for residents in more remote parts of the district who will be penalised by the congestion charge unless high quality interchanges are available in a ring around the congestion charging zone facilitating access to alternatives including park and ride/ cycle, bus, e-bike and e-scooter hire.
- 5.6 It is also of concern that those traveling towards the congestion charging zone and then seeking to change travel modes will incur ongoing costs for parking or alternative travel modes. The potential to also subsidise other modes such as e-bike hire schemes may prove key to ensuring first and last mile trips are possible for those travelling longer distances from Huntingdonshire into the city. However, this would still increase overall transport costs. Consideration will also need to be given to ensure space in buses is available for all users travelling with, e.g. foldable bikes and scooters, in addition to the need for extra space for people using wheelchairs that has been acknowledged by GCP.
- 5.7 The proposals focus on promotion of alternatives in the form of public transport and active travel modes. Insufficient consideration has also been given to the implications for Huntingdonshire businesses who need to make frequent, quick trips into Cambridge. The congestion charge would add to their costs which may have detrimental impacts on businesses and their customers.
- 5.8 The knock-on impacts of the proposals potentially could enable investment to be made into key bus service including to rural areas. In Huntingdonshire this could potentially unlock significant service improvements, however, it is unclear how funding raised by GCP can be invested outside of its area into services in other local authority areas. Furthermore, at this stage it is not clear how viable the suggested service frequencies from Huntingdon and St Neots to the city are likely to be. Other sources of funding may be required other than from fares and congestion charges, particularly as, if the scheme were highly successful in diverting people out of their cars the revenue source would be reduced.
- 5.9 It is unclear how the scope of improvements set out link to other service reviews, e.g. CPCA's work reviewing bus services. If investment in the bus network set out by GTC were able to free up other resources to improve or provide public transport services in areas not covered by this proposal this may be seen as a positive for Huntingdonshire, enabling connectivity

between more rural areas and potentially freeing up other public transport funding.

- 5.10 There are some potentially positive outcomes from the proposed congestion charge. For those using the bus network services may be more accessible, quicker and cheaper. Improvements to cycling and walking routes into and within Cambridge will offer options for active travel that can provide health benefits. Air pollution reductions will have health and environmental benefits. The reduction in carbon emissions will contribute to reaching net zero targets. However, as the study progresses a stronger working relationship with HDC would be welcomed to address the concerns raised in this report.

6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN

- 6.1 A letter to GCP setting out the points covered in this report has been prepared (see Appendix B). In advance of the next stage of consultation later in 2022, analyse the potential impacts of congestion charging on Huntingdonshire's residents and businesses to support any subsequent response to formal consultation.

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 People – Support people to improve their health and well-being
- 7.2 Place – Create, protect and enhance our safe and clean built and green environment:
- 7.2.1 Ensuring that our streets and open spaces are clean and safe
 - 7.2.2 Collaborating with partners, providers and stakeholders in an enterprising fashion to enhance community resilience and build sustainable opportunities for people
- 7.3 Place – Accelerate business growth and investment:
- 7.3.1 Supporting economic growth in market towns and rural areas
 - 7.3.2 Promoting inward investment
- 7.4 Place – Support development of infrastructure to enable growth:
- 7.4.1 Facilitating the delivery of infrastructure to support housing growth
 - 7.4.2 Influencing the development of the Highways and Transport Infrastructure Strategy

8. HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The proposed congestion charge seeks to secure the resources necessary to invest in the public transport network. GCP has identified this a key priority as it will, amongst others, reduce emissions that harm health, and encourage people to switch to active travel modes such as walking and cycling, even if for relatively short distances at the start or end of a journey made by another mode.

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The proposed congestion charge is a key element in the GCP's drive to meet its climate change targets. Transport is the biggest source of carbon emissions within Cambridgeshire. The knock-on impact may be that, by people in Huntingdonshire switching to alternative transport modes for their journeys to and from Cambridge, it will reduce emissions in the district as well, improve health by encouraging active travel, and bring about improvements to the public transport network in the district. The later could help those less able to afford a car themselves, however, this would be at a significant cost for those who were unable to shift to the alternative modes of travel and hence required to pay the congestion charge.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 10.1 GCP sees the introduction of charging as something that can benefit the wider Cambridgeshire area, including Huntingdonshire, despite the direct costs that will be incurred by some. Whilst charging drivers of motorised vehicles for trips will undoubtedly be unpopular, GCP consider it a realistic approach to raising the funding necessary for improvements to alternative travel options. However, the implications for residents who will not have easy access to the proposed transport alternatives and businesses who need to make frequent, quick trips into Cambridge has not been fully considered. Substantially more detail is required on the proposals to enable this Council to provide a robust, evidenced case in response to the next consultation stage. For example, GCP has not made it clear how it can fund these improvements outside of its geographical area. The linkages with other work, e.g. Bus Franchise Review by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority will need to inform the potential outcomes.

11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix A – Excerpts of bus corridor maps

Appendix B – Letter to GCP

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Making Connections - have your say on greener travel in Greater Cambridge](#) GCP Consultation website

['Making Connections a City Access Public Consultation - Have Your Say on Greener Travel in Greater Cambridge'](#) Autumn 2021 (GCP)

[Future Bus Network Map](#) (GCP)

[Northestowe and St Ives Corridor Map](#) (GCP)

[Cambourne and St Neots Corridor Map](#) (GCP)

CONTACT OFFICER

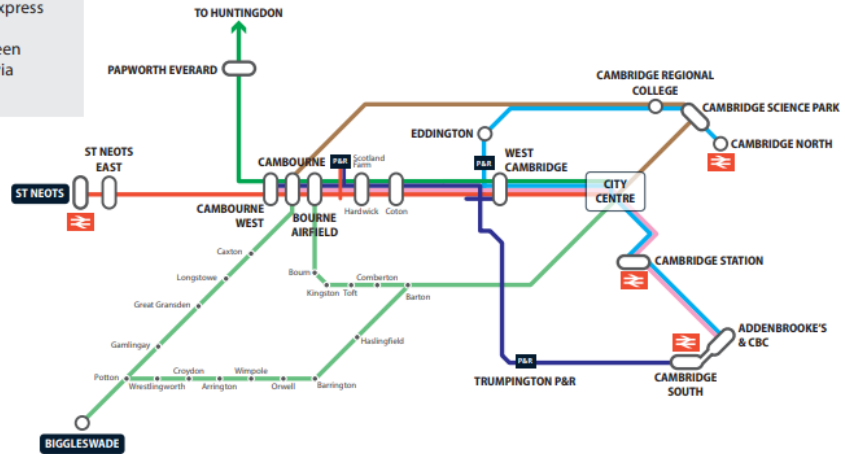
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APPENDIX A

CAMBOURNE AND ST NEOTS CORRIDOR

Improvements in this corridor would include:

- Services operating between 5am and midnight
- Between 7am and 7pm, a high frequency service would operate including:
 - A bus every 10 minutes from Cambourne to Cambridge, with a mix of express and stopping services with some going to Cambridge Biomedical Campus
 - A bus every 15 minutes from St Neots to Cambridge, with a mix of express and stopping services
 - A bus every 30 minutes between Huntingdon and Cambridge via Cambourne
- New services would run from Cambourne to Cambridge Biomedical Campus and Addenbrooke's via West Cambridge, every 30 minutes;
- The Scotland Farm travel hub would have a bus every 10 minutes to Cambridge and every 15 minutes to CBC;
- Hourly rural services would include:
 - Biggleswade to Cambourne via Gamlingay
 - Cambourne to Cambridge via Bourn and Comberton
 - Biggleswade to Cambridge via Orwell
- Lower fares
- Small villages will have opportunities to 'plug into' this network, whether that be through a regular connecting bus service, a demand responsive bus service, or access to a travel hub



NORTHSTOWE, ST IVES AND BAR HILL CORRIDOR

Improvements in this corridor would include:

- Services operating between 5am and midnight
- Between 7am and 7pm, a high frequency service would operate including:
 - A bus every 5 minutes or less from St Ives to Cambridge
 - A bus every 10 minutes from Huntingdon to Cambridge
 - A bus every 10 minutes from Bar Hill to Cambridge
- Some of the new services would run onwards to Cambridge rail station and the Biomedical Campus, providing a fast and direct link;
- Hourly rural services would include:
 - A loop service covering villages between Swavesey, Longstanton, Bar Hill and Papworth Everard
 - Connections from Somersham, Ramsey and Chatteris to St Ives
- Lower fares
- Small villages will have opportunities to 'plug into' this network, whether that be through a regular connecting bus service, a demand responsive bus service, or access to a travel hub.



APPENDIX B – DRAFT LETTER TO GCP

Dear [name],

PROPOSED CONGESTION CHARGING IN CAMBRIDGE

I write on behalf of Huntingdonshire District Council to express its concerns in relation to the proposed introduction of charging in Cambridge city by Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP).

At its Cabinet meeting on [date], members of Huntingdonshire District Council considered the potential impacts of the options GCP is considering for congestion charging and, in particular, the flexible charge approach. It noted the potential use of funds raised from congestion charging to improve bus services and other active travel modes.

Whilst we welcome the GCP introducing measures that will improve travel to and within Cambridge for not only its residents but commuters and visitors from Huntingdonshire several concerns have been raised, which I wish to draw to your attention.

- The proposed congestion charge may penalise residents in villages and more remote parts of the district for whom non-car journeys may involve multiple changes of modes and substantially longer journey times
- The viability of the 'plug in' opportunities from villages is challenged along with their feasibility in providing sufficiently frequent services to provide a reliable alternative to the private car
- If the congestion charge succeeds in achieving the desired mode changes it is unclear how adequate funding sources will be secured to maintain support for the alternative travel options
- Clarity is needed on how the proposals are connected with other service reviews, in particular the Bus Franchise Review
- Clarity is also needed on whether GCP can legitimately spend revenue improving bus services outside of its area as this will have significant implications for the provision of proposed service upgrades within Huntingdonshire

The Council seeks to ensure that GCP has fully considered the impacts of its proposals on all those who travel to and from the city, in particular those for whom access to public transport options is, and is likely to remain, unrealistic. An opportunity to work with GCP to resolve these issues will be welcomed.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Ryan Fuller

Executive Leader, and Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development