

## **Proposal to Establish a Faversham Bus Users Forum**

### **Purpose of the Proposal**

The Bus Users Survey response has shown a positive appetite for a Faversham Bus Users Forum.

This proposal recommends that Faversham Town Council establishes a **Faversham Bus Users Forum** to provide a structured, inclusive platform for residents, stakeholders, and transport providers to discuss local bus services and work collaboratively to improve bus services in Faversham.

### **Background and Rationale**

Bus services are a vital part of Faversham's transport network, supporting access to employment, education, healthcare, retail, and social activities. They are particularly important for residents who do not have access to a private car, including older people, young people, and those with disabilities.

In recent years, bus services nationally and locally have faced challenges including service reductions, reliability issues, changing travel patterns, and financial pressures. At the same time, there is growing emphasis on sustainable transport, reducing carbon emissions, and supporting healthy, inclusive communities.

Currently, there is no formal, regular mechanism within Faversham for bus users to collectively raise concerns, share experiences, or contribute ideas directly with the Town Council and other relevant bodies. A Bus Users Forum would address this gap.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Faversham Bus Users Forum**

The proposed Forum would aim to:

- Represent the views and experiences of bus users in Faversham
- Provide constructive feedback on bus services, including routes, timetables, reliability, accessibility, and fares
- Act as a consultative body for the Town Council on bus and wider transport-related matters
- Facilitate dialogue between bus users, bus operators, Kent County Council, and other stakeholders
- Support the Council's objectives around sustainability, accessibility, and community wellbeing (including work on becoming age friendly)
- Encourage greater use of bus services by identifying barriers and promoting good practice

### **Scope and Role**

The Forum would be advisory and consultative in nature and would not replace the statutory responsibilities of Kent County Council as the local transport authority. Its role would include:

- Gathering and summarising user feedback and evidence
- Identifying recurring issues and potential solutions
- Responding to consultations on transport matters where appropriate
- Sharing information with the wider community
- Highlighting positive developments as well as areas of concern

## **Membership**

Membership should be open and inclusive, and may include:

- Local residents who use or wish to use bus services
- Representatives of community groups and voluntary organisations
- Town Councillors
- Representatives from bus operators (by invitation)
- Representatives from Kent County Council or other relevant bodies (by invitation)

The Forum should aim to reflect a broad range of users, including different age groups, mobility needs, and include users from all parts of the town.

## **Governance and Operation**

- The Forum would operate under terms of reference agreed by the Active Travel Committee and Full Town Council
- Meetings could be held quarterly, hybrid/in-person at The Guildhall
- A Chair and Vice-Chair could be elected from among Forum members
- Administrative support with agendas and notes shared electronically where possible
- Key issues and recommendations to be reported to the Active Travel Committee for consideration.

## **Benefits to Faversham Town Council and the Community**

Establishing a Bus Users Forum would:

- Provide the Council with informed, community-based insight into local transport issues
- Strengthen engagement with residents on an important public service
- Support evidence-based representations to Kent County Council and bus operators
- Contribute to wider goals around sustainability, inclusion, and reduced car dependency

## **Resource Requirements**

The resource requirements for the Bus Users Forum are expected to be modest. These may include:

- Use of meeting space (where required)
- Officer or Councillor time for liaison and for occasionally attending meetings
- Basic administrative support in early stages

No significant financial expenditure is anticipated.

## **Next Steps**

If the proposal is supported, the following steps are recommended:

1. Agreement in principle by Faversham Town Council via the Active Travel Committee
2. Development and approval of the draft Terms of Reference (attached – see Appendix One)
3. Public invitation for residents to participate including those respondents to the Bus Users' Survey who expressed an interest
4. Convening of an inaugural meeting of the Faversham Bus Users Forum

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that Faversham Town Council approves the establishment of a **Faversham Bus Users Forum** as an advisory and engagement body to support the improvement of local bus services for the benefit of residents and the wider community.

RG

19.01.26

## Appendix One

### **Faversham Bus Users Forum**

#### **Draft Terms of Reference**

##### **1. Name**

The group shall be known as the **Faversham Bus Users Forum** (“the Forum”).

##### **2. Purpose**

The purpose of the Forum is to provide a structured, inclusive platform for bus users and stakeholders in Faversham to discuss local bus services and to advise Faversham Town Council on issues relating to local bus services.

### **3. Aims and Objectives**

The Forum aims to:

- Represent the views and experiences of bus users in Faversham
- Identify issues and opportunities relating to local bus services, including reliability, frequency, routes, accessibility, information, and fares
- Provide constructive, evidence-based feedback to Faversham Town Council
- Support dialogue between bus users, bus operators, Kent County Council, and other relevant stakeholders
- Contribute to wider objectives around sustainable transport, accessibility, and community wellbeing
- Encourage greater use of bus services by identifying barriers and promoting improvements

### **4. Scope and Role**

- The Forum is an **advisory body** and has no decision-making or statutory powers
- Comment on how well workers, learners, shoppers, and visitors are served
- Effectiveness of bus routes
- Communication from bus operators
- Provision and upkeep of bus shelters and seating
- Connectivity of bus routes and train services
- Promote the introduction of low or zero carbon buses
- Fares and pricing
- The Forum may respond to consultations and develop recommendations for consideration by Faversham Town Council's Active Travel Committee.

### **5. Membership**

Membership of the Forum shall be open and inclusive and may include:

- Residents of Faversham who use, or wish to use, bus services
- Representatives of local community, voluntary, and interest groups
- Town Councillors
- Representatives of bus operators, Kent County Council, or other relevant bodies, by invitation

The Forum should seek to reflect a broad range of users, including different age groups, mobility needs, and areas of the town.

## **6. Chairing and Officers**

- The Forum shall elect a **Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary** from among its members
- The Chair and Vice-Chair shall normally be elected annually
- The Chair will be responsible for chairing meetings, agreeing agendas, and acting as the main point of contact with the Town Council
- In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair shall assume these responsibilities
- The Secretary will be responsible for taking minutes, arranging meetings and administrative support.

## **7. Meetings**

- The Forum shall meet **quarterly**, or as otherwise agreed
- Meetings may be held in person, online, or in a hybrid format
- Meetings shall be open to the public
- An agenda shall be circulated in advance of each meeting

**8.** Notes or minutes shall be produced and made publicly available via the FTC website.

## **9. Decision-Making**

- The Forum will not have decision-making powers, but will make recommendations to the Active Travel Committee for consideration
- The Forum shall seek to operate by consensus wherever possible
- Where a vote is required, each member present shall have one vote
- Recommendations shall be recorded in the minutes.

## **10. Reporting and Accountability**

- The Forum shall report key issues, findings, and recommendations to the Active Travel Committee.
- The Forum may provide written summaries or reports as required
- The Active Travel Committee is not obliged to adopt the Forum's recommendations

## **11. Support and Resources**

- Officer time will be required in the early stages of setting up the Forum

- Councillors may wish to attend meetings
- The Forum will operate with minimal cost and resource implications
- Use of Town Council meeting rooms will be provided

## **11. Code of Conduct**

- Members are expected to treat each other with respect and courtesy
- The Forum shall operate in a constructive, non-partisan manner
- The Chair may take appropriate action to manage conduct and ensure effective meetings

## **12. Review of Terms of Reference**

- These Terms of Reference shall be reviewed after the first year of operation and thereafter as required
- Any amendments shall be agreed by the Forum and approved by Faversham Town Council