

Meeting with Pembury Parish Council and Borough Councillors Paul Barrington-King(also KCC), David Haywood and Paul Roberts 14 April 2022

Everyone agreed that a good bus service is particularly important to Pembury and the village should work together to make the case for safeguarding services and finding new ways to promote services.

The commercially-run 208A service has improved its reliability and capacity in recent days since Greg Clark and PBK raised its sporadic service with Kent County Council. However, this has not been sustained for long enough for it to be considered to be a suitable safeguard if the subsidised 208 service were withdrawn. Parishioners would monitor performance of the 208A during the weeks ahead and feed back to Greg Clark and Paul Barrington-King to discuss with KCC. In the meantime all would be clear that the option of withdrawing the subsidised service should be opposed in the consultation.

The 6, 6A and 6X services are commercially run and have suffered falling passenger numbers since before Covid. Greg Clark would discuss with Arriva what extra revenue might be needed to avoid reductions in service and with the Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust and KCC whether any additional contribution could be possible, including in the light of the future medical school accommodation on the hospital site.

Everyone agreed that the Stone Court Lane stop on the 6A route is important for villagers. Greg Clark would discuss with Arriva options for retaining it.

The KCC consultation is unlikely to result in all possible reductions being made – it is a long list and it is important that the village and its representatives contribute to the consultation.

KCC has just been awarded £35 million from the Government's bus fund. It is aimed at innovation to increase usage of routes. Paul Barrington-King and Greg Clark would speak to KCC and Transport Ministers to clarify precisely what it can be used for. Some measures – such as live departure boards on bus stops – could increase bus usage.

The main challenge is that more people value the availability of local bus services than use them. If every Pembury resident made a commitment to use the bus even once a quarter it would make a big difference to the security of bus services and get people into the habit of using them. The Parish and elected representatives would consider what initiatives it could take to drive up usage for the benefit of the whole community.