

Committee: Full Council

Date: 10 December 2018

Title: Bus Service Provision in Honiton

Purpose of Report: To inform Members of the difficulties faced by Honiton Residents reliant on Public Transport.

Recommendation: Honiton Town Council resolves for officers to write to Devon County Council to request information on what their plans are to improve the services offered to Honiton Residents who are reliant on Public Transport.

Background:

1. Devon County Council provides a Travel Devon interactive map showing bus routes and bus stops in Honiton and financially supports the bus routes. Fernbank Advertising Ltd. is responsible for bus shelters (not bus stops as such) in Honiton.

Report:

2. Bus services have been altered in Honiton partly to provide Ottery St. Mary Residents with a frequent bus service to a main line railway station and this has reduced bus availability in the north eastern part of Honiton's built up area where housing estates have not been developed in a 'bus friendly' way resulting in many Residents being forced to walk up the narrow and quite steep section of Clapper Lane where there is not even one raised footway.

3. Honiton Town Council has been successful over the years in obtaining some improvements such as at Whitebridges, new bus stops in Kings Road and Monkton Road and 'flags' (bus stop signs) added to bus stops in Lower Brand Lane and Weatherill Road removing uncertainty for bus passengers.

4. Honiton Transport Reviews have been mentioned over the years however apart from the limited A35 Trunk Road transport review that resulted in the eight Kings Road and Monkton Road improvements mentioned above have not taken place presumably due to Austerity.

5. Problems that would be highlighted in a transport review include:

5.1 Few buses now serving the East End of the High Street and the quite new Kings Road bus stops.

5.2 No flagged bus stops between Honiton Railway Station and Mount Pleasant, Offwell for Axminster bound buses.

5.3 Bus drivers presumably due to Insurance concerns being reluctant to stop unless the bus stop on the other side of the road has 'buses stop on both sides of road' or similar advice displayed even though the stops are on the interactive map; Pine Park Road and Waterleat Avenue bus stops are examples.

5.4 The long distance between the Library and Jobcentre Plus bus stops and between the Evangelical Congregational Church and Jobcentre Plus bus stops in the town centre, probably to assist car drivers with on street parking even though not all Residents are able or can afford to drive or own a car.

5.5 The recent Chamber meeting to which members of the Town Management Committee were invited was correctly informed of the very poor bus service for Otter Valley Park. Years ago Otter Valley Park was the terminal point of some Devon General buses from Exeter. The quite new Monkton Road bus stops are a slight improvement and another slight improvement would be a bus stop provided at the bottom of Lower Northcote Road (a road maintainable by DCC and HTC) on Service 20.

6.1 Bus shelters have been requested in Honiton Bottom Road and at Lidl so far without success. Fernbank Advertising Ltd. bus shelters in Honiton are smaller than older shelters in Honiton and some that Fernbank Advertising has supplied in other towns in exchange for advertising revenue; a shelter in Sidmouth Road is smaller than one replaced and which then went missing, another in Sidmouth Road has not has not been repaired although included in HTC budgets over the years and repairs have for some time been sought for the Honiton Surgery bus shelter.

6.2 Two bus shelters in New Street are side by side when one could be moved to Weatherill Road close to the Gronau Close junction; the fact that there are bus shelters further up and down the road is no consolation to residents of Gronau Close and Tweed Close who use buses.

7. Bus stops in Cranbrook are closer than those in Honiton, some younger residents of Cranbrook could have difficulty in walking long distances to a bus stop but the same applies to some older residents of Honiton.

8. Returning to the provision of a frequent bus service enabling Ottery St. Mary Residents to reach a main line railway station with relatively frequent stopping trains (more than serve Feniton Station), considerable housing development is taking place in Ottery St. Mary within walking distance of, as well as bus services close to, the former railway station so should not Ottery St. Mary be pressing for the reopening of that railway line? This is also a matter for Honiton as Sidmouth traffic is directed off the A30 through Honiton and trains stopping at Ottery St. May also served Sidmouth and other communities.

CLlr Roy Coombs

Councillor with Special Responsibilities for the Environment

December 2018