

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET MEMBER MEETING – JOBS, ECONOMY AND
TRANSPORT**

22 October 2013

Report of the Acting Strategic Director – Environmental Services

**PETITION – REQUEST FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A
LOCAL BUS SERVICE ALONG HANDLEY ROAD, NEW
WHITTINGTON**

(1) **Purpose of the Report** To consider the County Council's response to the petition received requesting the establishment/reinstatement of a local bus service along Handley Road, New Whittington, Chesterfield.

(2) **Information and Analysis**

Background

At the meeting on 18 August 2012, the Cabinet Member – Highways and Transport, acknowledged receipt of a petition seeking the extension of the current Bus Service 50 to include Handley Road, New Whittington (Minute No. 190/12 refers). A similar service last operated along Handley Road seven years ago. It was resolved that the Strategic Director – Environmental Services be asked to investigate the matters raised in the petition.

Under the terms of the Transport Act 1985, the County Council has to identify socially necessary bus services which are not provided by the commercial bus operators. The Act does not set out the level of support required for bus services that are deemed socially necessary. In Derbyshire, 85% of the local bus network is operated commercially, that is to say, funded without subsidy from the local Authority.

Current Situation

At present, Service 50, a half hourly service operated commercially by Stagecoach in Chesterfield, travels from High Street, New Whittington, along the lower part of Handley Road and on to Eckington. The Service 50A, an hourly service, diverts along Highland Road before re-joining the B6052, just below the junction of Handley Road with Eckington Road. This junction is the nearest bus stop for residents along the upper part of Handley Road (the residents requesting the bus service). The distance from this junction to the

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top of Handley Road is just over 400 metres and is the furthest distance any Handley Road resident lives from existing bus services. The Institute of Highways and Transport recognises that the optimum walking distance to access bus services is 300 metres, with the desired maximum being 400 metres.

The request is to extend the 50/50A services by either adding a loop to the existing 50 or 50A Service to the top of Handley Road, turning right into Slag Lane and back out onto the B6052. Stagecoach has advised that these roads are less suitable for the full size vehicles used on the 50A Service. Previously, smaller vehicles were used on the service. Stagecoach has also advised that to incorporate this diversion would leave other roads unserved or with a lower frequency as there is insufficient spare time in vehicle schedules to cover any additional length of route. Service 50 also co-ordinates with other services in Chesterfield and Sheffield to provide connecting services and, thus, enhances the local bus network. These connections would be lost if the timings of the service were altered.

Having failed to identify spare time in any other local bus service timetable which could serve Handley Road, an option could be to source a new additional service. Provision of additional vehicles to facilitate this is logistically feasible but would be prohibitively expensive to fund for either the operator, commercially, or the Authority, by way of a tendered contract. Only a very small proportion of the cost incurred would be covered by the additional fares revenue generated. It is also difficult to see any practical new route that would not compete for the majority of its length with the existing commercial services; such competition is not permitted.

For those residents who have difficulty walking the short distance to access existing bus services, Community Transport is currently available as a more appropriate form of transport, and there is a door-to-door service with assistance to those passengers who require help to carry shopping, etc.

Local Member Comment

Councillor Dean Collins supports the request for a bus service to be provided to the residents on Handley Road and is aware of the financial impact enforced on the Council by Government but will continue to press for reinstatement of this route in the foreseeable future.

Conclusions

Although not directly served by public transport, the nearby local bus network gives access to a range of key destinations and will enable most Handley Road residents to access essential services, such as employment, education, shopping and leisure.

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The characteristics of Slag Lane and Main Road make them unsuitable for a route extension. They are both unclassified roads of single carriageway with no passing places. Consideration should be given to the resultant effect on services elsewhere. This, together with the proximity of established local bus services along Handley Road, means that it is not viable for either a commercial bus operator or the Authority to seek and provide a local bus service along all of Handley Road. The Authority will, however, continue to review this request for service in future discussions with Stagecoach.

A solution is available from Community Transport and this can be used by those unable to walk to the Eckington Road junction with Handley Road.

As the Council's local bus service support budget is fully committed, the only means by which the Council could provide the requested service is either by removing or reducing the frequency of a contracted service elsewhere. This, of course, would be detrimental to service users elsewhere.

(3) **Financial Considerations** The Council must ensure the finite funds are best targeted to provide service provision while being mindful of best value. Reinstatement after seven years of a bus service for Handley Road, would require significant additional expenditure and would produce limited results, given the short stretch of road it would serve. The option of removing or reducing a service elsewhere, denying other users of a service, could not be justified in order to provide a small area with a closer service.

(4) **Environmental and Health Considerations** Community Transport schemes fulfil an important role improving access to essential services for those who cannot use or have difficulty accessing conventional public transport.

(5) **Transport Considerations** As set out in the report. It is considered that the actions outlined above should not have any detrimental impact on equalities, race discrimination and crime and disorder. The actions also seek to provide journey opportunities to locations for all members of the community.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources and property considerations.

(6) **Key Decision** No.

(7) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

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(8) **Background Papers** Held on file in the Local Bus Section of the Environmental Services Department. Officer contact details – Janet Pickersgill, extension 36734.

(9) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That:

- 9.1 The Cabinet Member notes that the solution lies with the existing door to door service provided by CT4TC, removing the need to walk to access local bus services, providing the additional benefit of assistance for those in need.
- 9.2 The local Member and lead petitioner be advised of the views as set out in this report.

Mike Ashworth
Acting Strategic Director – Environmental Services