

TO: SWALE JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DATE: MONDAY 7TH SEPTEMBER 2009

SUBJECT: PETITION – SEATING IN BUS SHELTER, EAST STREET, SITTINGBOURNE

BY: Head of Environmental Services

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: Members to consider recently submitted petition containing 37 signatures requesting the reinstatement of the seating in the bus shelter adjacent to Lavender Court, in East Street, Sittingbourne.

Decision Required: **That Members note the report and recommend that the seating be reinstated.**

Introduction

1. Following complaints of anti-social behaviour caused by youths congregating on the seating in the bus shelter, arrangements were made with the shelter owners, Clear Channel, to remove the seating. Although this has alleviated problems with anti-social behaviour in the area, a petition has now been received requesting the reinstatement of the seating.
2. A location plan of the bus shelter can be found in Annex A.

Discussion

3. Local residents have previously complained that they regularly experienced problems on Friday and Saturday evenings with youths congregating in the bus shelter in East Street. It was also claimed that takeaway food and packaging were regularly discarded in and around the shelter by these groups, causing an unpleasant environment for nearby residents.
4. Initially it was requested that the bus shelter be re-located approximately 20 metres from its current location to outside Plaza Court, adjacent to the layby. This request was considered, but this was deemed not to be an option in view of the high costs involved, as this would involve the disconnection and re-connection of the electrical supply to the lighting in the shelter. The bus shelter owners, Clear Channel,

were not prepared to meet such costs, and the Borough Council's limited maintenance budget was insufficient to cover these expenses.

5. A complaint was also received that allowing the bus to stop in the current location of the bus shelter was creating a highway safety issue, and that the shelter should therefore be re-located outside Plaza Court. However, it is now Kent Highways' policy to encourage buses to stop in the live lane of carriageways, as this acts as a traffic calming measure and also allows laybys to be used for short term parking. In this particular case, the layby outside of Plaza Court can be used as a drop-off point for visitors to the adjacent doctors' surgery and chemist, and also for short term parking by blue badge holders.

6. The issue of removing the seating was discussed with Swale's Access Officer prior to his departure, and although it was agreed that this was a regrettable action, the Officer stated that nationally the bus regulations did not yet insist on buses being fully accessible and felt there was little option but to remove the seating. Clear Channel was therefore requested to arrange for this removal. Following the removal of the seating the number of anti-social behaviour issues have reduced.

7. Prior to receipt of the petition, complaints were received following the removal of the seating, and it was agreed to monitor the situation. It was stated that since the removal of the seating, some passengers using the bus shelter were supplying their own seating in the form of garden chairs which were being left in the shelter and that the removal of the seating was therefore of little effect. Concern was also expressed that some passengers could only walk for short distances and no longer found it possible to use the bus shelter as they were unable to stand for long periods of time until the bus arrived.

8. Clear Channel has stated that they would be happy to reinstate the seating in the East Street bus shelter on our instruction, but would expect to recover the cost of this work from the Borough Council. The expected cost of this work would be around £250 and would be funded from the Borough Council's annual bus shelter maintenance budget.

Recommendation

9. Members are asked to note the petition of 37 signatures and recommend that the seating be reinstated in the bus shelter in East Street, and that the Community Safety Team be requested to monitor any subsequent issues of anti-social behaviour.

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Date: 14th August 2009

List of background documents – Annex A – Location Plan