

REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL BUS SHELTER SEATING PROVISION

AGENDA ITEM No. 11

MEETING: ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
DATE: 4TH SEPTEMBER 2024
REPORT BY: WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT MANAGER

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consider a request from a member of the public for additional seating in Town Council managed bus shelters.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The following request was received from a local independent disability advocate and operator of the local Facebook Group; Aycliffe Uncensored, requesting consideration of additional bus shelter seating. The request is summarised below:

'I was in my hometown recently and it was heartbreaking to see a lot of families and people having to sit on the floor at bus stops, the two in particular that I noticed as I used one myself and the other the bus passed, were Tesco's and Linden Place.

There were approximately six people at Linden and approximately four at Tesco.

I'd like to enquire about getting seating (that doesn't hurt the coccyx due to being slanted/or doesn't prevent you from seeing if the bus is arriving as many get missed with view obstruction) installed around our town.

I personally feel that people visiting the town seeing our townfolk forced to sit on floors would give them the wrong message or idea, and it is clearly impacting pregnant women, mothers with pushchairs, the disabled, mobility impaired and the elderly.

I am hopeful we can all work towards being more supportive of our townfolk choosing public transport, many over personal vehicles, which only makes traffic easier for the town; and is more environmentally friendly overall.'

- 2.2 Bus shelter seating has been considered by the Council on a number of occasions in recent years.
- 2.3 Perch seats were installed in the bus shelters on Central Avenue near Tesco following a Council decision in February 2021. During the same meeting Members were asked to nominate other bus shelters which would benefit from seating for inclusion in future reports.
- 2.4 At the Environment Committee meeting on the 12th July 2023 it was agreed that *"eight of the 'back to the wall' style benches are purchased, six of which to be used to replace the existing perch seats and the remaining two be stored for future use"*.
- 2.5 Since this time the perch seats have been replaced in all bus shelters previously highlighted, including those opposite Tesco.
- 2.6 The two shelters at Linden Place do not have any associated seating.

3.0 Matters for Consideration

- 3.1 The Council currently provide 55 bus shelters around the parish, of which 13 have internal seating. Most have associated external seating, especially those in the town centre.
- 3.2 Usage of the various bus shelters largely depends on the location with the shelters towards the town centre getting used on a very regular basis. For this reason, the Council have always taken a pragmatic approach that seating would be considered in shelters on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.3 This is a reasonable and prudent approach, so that the limited financial resources can be targeted to bus shelters where there is a proven demand for seating.
- 3.4 The bus shelters highlighted at Linden Place do not have any associated seating. Considering that these bus shelters serve the train station as well as the local residents it would be reasonable to consider the installation of the two-remaining 'back to wall' benches currently held in stock be used in this location.
- 3.5 In previous meetings it was commented that while the 'back to wall' seats are better than perch seats, they are narrow, and it should be considered that wider benches be purchased in the future. As the bus shelters are single course, wider wall mounted benches would put excessive pressure on the wall and so ground fixed benches would need to be considered.
- 3.6 A suitably wide ground fixed bench is likely to cost £326 plus delivery and installation. It can therefore be considered that if seating was to be considered within *all* shelters, as per the request, an additional budget would be required of at least £18,000.
- 3.7 As mentioned in the request, it should also be highlighted that internal seating does significantly restrict sight lines to watch for approaching buses. Some of the newer shelters have side viewing windows for this purpose but short of redeveloping the bus shelters this cannot be avoided.

4.0 Policy Implications

- 4.1 This report complies with the Council's Aims and Targets No. 2: -
"To Manage the Council's Finances and Assets in a Responsible Manner".

5.0 Staffing Implications

- 5.1 Works staff time would be required to install any required benches.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 There is currently no budget set aside for additional bus shelter seating. However, if appropriate seating in *all* bus shelters was to be provided, an initial additional capital budget of at least £18,000 would be required.

7.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

- 7.1 There is a risk that seating associated with bus shelters could lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour and groups congregating around the structure.

8.0 Equal Opportunity Implications

8.1 The requested benches will benefit those with disabilities.

9.0 Environment, Biodiversity and Climate Change Implications

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk Assessment

10.1 It is not considered that the matter contained in this report poses a risk to health and safety of staff or to the financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

11.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

11.1 Is any personal or sensitive data required for this proposal which may have any implications for GDPR? **NO**

12.0 Recommendations

12.1 It is recommended that:

- i) Members receive report.
- ii) Members confirm if the two remaining 'back to wall' seats currently held in stock should be installed at the Linden Place bus shelters.
- iii) Members confirm whether seating in all bus shelters should be provided, and, if so, a capital budget of at least £18,000 be established in the Medium-Term Financial Plan to allow for installation, on a rolling programme, over the coming years.

Works and Environment Manager