

GUILDFORD JOINT COMMITTEE

ITEM 5: PETITIONS AND PETITION REPSONSES

DATE: 03 JULY 2019

SUBJECT: STAGECOACH BUS ROUTE NO.3 (TONGHAM) PETITION

**DIVISION/
WARD(S)**

AFFECTED: SHALFORD, ASH SOUTH & TONGHAM

PETITION DETAILS:

I am writing to request the reinstatement of Stagecoach Bus Service 3 to the Tongham area.

Lead petitioner: Mrs M Kerbey, Tongham

Number of signatures submitted: 149

Background

Until 17 February 2019, Stagecoach bus service 3 (Aldershot-Ash-Mytchett-Frimley Park Hospital-Camberley-Yateley) operated via the Tongham area. From that date, Stagecoach diverted it to run direct from the A331 junction to the Greyhound Roundabout in Ash, via Aldershot Road, omitting Tongham. Whilst there is an alternative service available from Tongham to Aldershot, there is no direct alternative northward to Frimley and Camberley.

Aside from some county council financial support for Sunday journeys only, bus service 3 is run by Stagecoach on a commercial basis. National legislation gives bus companies the prerogative to make their own decisions on their bus routes. The changes were not instigated by the county council. Moreover the county council is not in a position to insist that Stagecoach reverse their decision, as on weekdays route 3 is not subject to financial support or a contractual arrangement.

Stagecoach states that the omission of part of the route, where patronage was relatively low, is due to increasing traffic congestion at various points along the route of service 3, leading to longer end-to-end journey times and reduced punctuality, making it less attractive for users overall. Ideally, extra buses and drivers would be deployed as a way of reliably maintaining the normal service frequency with the longer journey times. However, the overall passenger numbers and revenue income preclude that being a sustainable option for Stagecoach.

RESPONSE:

Stagecoach has identified a number of traffic congestion “pinch points” on service 3. The county council is working with the bus company to look at how some of these might be tackled. The council and Stagecoach are committed to the Blackwater Valley Gold Grid Quality Bus Corridor project, with potential investment from EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership. This aims to deliver improved passenger information, a better passenger

waiting environment and to also address where feasible certain congestion “pinch points”, so as to improve reliability and to reduce journey times.

Another bus service (route 41) runs between Ash, North Camp and Farnborough. This is contracted and mainly funded by Hampshire County Council using Section 106 ‘developer funding’. Surrey County Council also makes a contribution to route 41. Stagecoach has suggested a restructuring of route 41 to include Tongham plus an extension to Frimley Park Hospital. This would provide a number of direct trips on weekdays. This proposal is supported by Surrey County Council; however, Hampshire County Council has concerns over future funding streams for this service in the longer term, which will need to be resolved. Both councils and Stagecoach are continuing a dialogue to establish whether a way can be found to achieve the proposed change, or similar, to route 41 in a sustainable manner.

RECOMMENDATION

The Joint Committee is asked to note the officer’s response.

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