

Rowlands Castle Parish Council

11 The Green, Rowlands Castle PO9 6BW

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Collation of RCPC's Responses to Various Elements of HCC's Future Services Consultation 2024

The responses below were submitted to HCC's on-line Consultation system by the Clerk on 28 and 31 March 2023, in conjunction with answers to the multiple-choice responses on each section as to whether RCPC "Strongly Agreed/Agreed/Neither/Disagreed/Strongly Disagreed" with HCC's proposals.

Passenger Transport

The No 27 bus service provided by Stagecoach between Rowlands Castle and Emsworth is one of the services supported by HCC that may be lost if that support is withdrawn. It is a basic service running 4 times per day Mon-Fri only and provides the only public service through Rowlands Castle village and built-up area southwards towards Havant, albeit not directly as it passes through part of Leigh Park, thus extending journey times significantly for village residents wanting to visit Havant. The cost per individual travelling is presented as around £1.85 subsidy by HCC. This is not a particularly large sum and the amount may be made up by Stagecoach charging passengers the amount required to enable the service to at least break even. No attempt appears to have been made to establish whether RC residents (and others on the Havant to Emsworth leg) would be prepared to pay more, or not use a concessionary bus pass, in order to retain the service. After all, there is no point in being entitled to a bus pass if one cannot use it!

The service is irregular rather than regular, leaving Uplands Road at 1000, 1155, 1350 and 1545. Inward services depart Havant Bus Station at 0929, 1119, 1314 and 1509. For those going shopping in Havant there is barely one hour to do any shopping or other calls, indeed the 1000 and 1155 services out only allows people 45 minutes in Havant if they want to return by the next available service; to do anything else one has to wait another 2 hours approximately, which is far too long.

The service needs to be reviewed to provide a better period of time in Havant (at least 1.5 hours would be very useful). This could be coupled with a direct run to Havant avoiding Leigh Park where very few residents need to go. Alternatively, it could divert into Stockheath Road just as far as the big roundabout at the Park Parade shopping complex and return round it to the bus stop on the eastbound side before returning to the Petersfield Road and so on to Havant.

Overall, no attempt has been made by the operator to review the effectiveness of the service into and out of RC village and to determine whether the service could be made to pay by speeding up the journey times to/from Havant and providing more time for residents in Havant. The loss of this service will mean that Rowlands Castle residents will have no public passenger service to access our local town and bus services to other destinations. This is the reason for our objection to the loss of subsidy for this service.

Should the bus subsidy be taken as a savings measure and the service discontinued by the operator then every effort must be made by HCC to use developer funding promised from S106 and CIL agreements to improve the accessibility of the Rowlands Castle station down platform, as the station will be the only source of public transport left in the village and, for many residents, the down platform is inaccessible via the steep concrete bridge currently in

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situ. A proposal has been put forward by this Parish Council to have a ramp built on Network Rail land behind the down platform to reach down to street level and thus facilitate those with buggies and prams, those with poor mobility and wheelchair users. As Network Rail has limited funds for a massive number of projects across the rail network to improve accessibility the use of developers' funds to support technical assessments and even part of the project is essential to avoid Rowlands Castle being another public transport desert. HCC is requested to agree that developers' funds earmarked for improving accessibility to the station be used for the proposed down platform accessibility project.

Highways Maintenance

Only spend the Department for Transport (DfT) money on major schemes and none of the "top-up" money from HCC's budget. The reduced amount of 'top up' remaining should then be spent on the reactive maintenance budget with a caveat that HCC does a proper job of it. If the money was spent more wisely the highways would last for longer, reducing future expenditure on having to revisit things that should have been better maintained in the first place.

The improvement in roads will reduce the number of insurance claims and the money spent on lawyers and legal processes and pay-outs for damages can be put back into the Highways budget.

Here is an example of odd Highways behaviour. Highways operatives/contractors chose a pot-hole on the quiet side of The Green in Rowlands Castle and filled it whilst ignoring far more dangerous examples elsewhere in the same area. They did a very amateur job that will last all of a month or so before it needs another visit from other operatives who may then schedule another repair, potentially poorly executed, in the future. This seems like a waste of time and tax payers' money.

On a wider basis, we need a 'root-and-branch' change to working practices.

Street Lighting

Rowlands Castle Parish sits within a buffer zone for the SDNP International Dark Skies Reserve Reduction and dimming of streetlighting within the parish will help secure this precious asset and international status.

There are several areas in the Parish, such as the Recreation Ground, that may see increased risk of antisocial behaviour if lighting is dimmed significantly. Motion sensor lighting, alongside CCTV might be necessary to reduce risk of vandalism in the Parish. It is appreciated that such measures may not be feasible or, in the case of the Recreation Ground, may be up to the landowner to implement.

Reduction in streetlighting in the Parish may increase the risk of falls and accidents as many of our rural roads, paths and crossing points are in a poor condition, unsafe and NOT regularly or satisfactorily maintained. Reduced street lighting will necessitate improved HCC highway and pavement maintenance within settlements.

The Parish Council would support greater use of LEDs to save energy costs, help the planet and last longer.

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County-wide provision of a “Staying safe whilst out in the hours of darkness” initiative would be useful. Advice on staying safe and could be part of this initiative.

Highways Winter Service

It is recognised that weather forecasts can be unpredictable and it is therefore difficult to gauge exactly what will be required in future years. However, the last 3 winters included the ‘Beast from the East’ and 2 very wet winters, both of which started with a very cold snap.

On that basis, Rowlands Castle Parish Council is concerned that at least some of the local roads currently on the Priority One Network may be removed from the list for the sake of financial savings, despite the fact that new development and infrastructure means these roads are busier than ever. In addition, emergency vehicles trying to access more remote places within our Parish may be delayed by ungritted roads, presenting a potential threat to life.

If the review recommends reductions to the Priority One Network there could be more accidents, breakdowns etc. It is therefore proposed that individual communities are provided with adequate signage for flooding and icy conditions, which could be positioned promptly at the required location rather than having to contact and then wait for Highways to do so. It is appreciated that not all communities will have appropriate storage for such signage. That said it may be financially efficient and result in greater retention of signage which currently seems to get left around the county and not collected for some time, if ever.

Competitive (one-off) Grant Schemes

Whilst the loss of such schemes would be regrettable, there is no point taking partial savings on this matter so we would support the scrapping of them in the current financial circumstances.