

## Motion to Full Council - 15 July 2008 Concessionary Bus Fares

An Early Day Motion No 922, reproduced below, has been submitted to Parliament by Jeremy Browne MP regarding concessionary bus fares for pensioners:-

“EDM 922

Concessionary Bus Travel for Pensioners in Taunton Deane

18.02.2008

Browne, Jeremy

That this House welcomes the concessionary bus pass scheme for pensioners in Taunton Deane; recognises the benefits such a scheme provides to local pensioners, including encouraging participation in leisure and social activities and widening access to local amenities and services; also welcomes the reduction in car use the full implementation of the scheme would encourage and the consequential benefits to the local environment and congestion; expresses concern at the shortfall in national funding provided for the scheme in Taunton Deane for 2007/2008, which accounted for only 38 per cent of the actual funding required; regrets that the previous local administration in Taunton Deane failed to balance the budget and provided only 28 per cent of the funding needed for 2007/2008 when it was decided in February 2007, with the consequence that the current administration must attempt to rectify its error without making up the £538,000 shortfall through a 10.46 per cent Council Tax rise; welcomes the scheme's nationwide expansion in 2008/2009, but expresses serious concern that the £1,037,000 required to finance it in Taunton Deane will again not be provided at a potential cost to the local taxpayer of 20 per cent more on their Council Tax bill; urges the Government to rectify the funding shortfall for 2007/2008; and calls on the Government to provide sufficient funding in time for the nationwide rollout of the 2008/2009 scheme so that Taunton Deane pensioners and residents are not penalised by administrative accounting shortfalls as they have been previously.”

By presenting this EDM in the form above it is regrettable that our MP shows a complete lack of understanding of Local Government finances or chooses to ignore the fundamental requirements when budget setting occurs, in order to score cheap political points.

His reference to the “previous administration” not having set a balanced budget in 2007/2008 and referring to a potential 20% Council Tax increase is wholly inaccurate and misleading information. It is just not permissible to set a budget that is not balanced and equally the Government will not allow a 20% rise in Council Tax. It is also a slur on the excellent staff at Taunton Deane to suggest they would allow an illegal budget to be set.

This is purely gesture politics of the worst kind and our MP should know better than peddle this alarming and misleading information. It completely detracts from where the main focus should be and that is the gross under funding of what is an excellent scheme, but not adequately resourced by central Government, whichever party is in control.

Therefore this Council **resolves** that:-

1. The Chief Executive to write to our MP requesting the EDM be withdrawn or amended to remove the erroneous and misleading information; and
2. This Council fully supports any attempt to secure adequate funding for this excellent scheme but only when pursued on a factual basis. It should be above political point scoring.