

The Chronicle, Thursday, 5th August 2021.

New councillor driven by transport interest by James Connolly

Biddulph's newest councillor has set his sights on parking problems around schools, which he says is the main issue in his ward.

Adrian Lawton, a bus enthusiast and transport expert, was co-opted onto the town council last Tuesday after working with the authority for more than six years.

Born and raised on High Street in 1948, from a young age Coun Lawton enjoyed watching vehicles passing his window, which he said gave him a "lifelong interest" in transport.

He said: "I am the new boy at the council, but certainly not in Biddulph. Since being a little boy, I have watched traffic going past on the high street; I am particularly interested in buses, which I saw all the time when I lived at the side of that busy artery."

Having worked in computers and data processing all his life, Coun Lawton's first interaction with the town council came six years ago, when he spoke at a meeting to suggest that the authority should appoint a public transport coordinator to deal with travel issues in the town.

This evolved into the setting up of a specialised working group for transport that Coun Lawton then served on as a member of the public.

While on the group, he was involved in the town council taking over the running of the 93-bus after the county council withdrew funding for it three years ago. He said he was impressed by this "bold decision" made by the town.

More recently, he has helped the group with its successful call for an access so that buses can stop at the new Aldi store under construction off Tunstall Road.

When a vacancy came up in May for the South Ward following the resignation of former Independent Coun Paul Barlow, Coun Lawton was asked if he would be interested.

He said: "For six years, I have been dealing with councillors and officers with regard to bus issues and I have come to respect them all and the good job they do in facilitating things like the covid vaccinations, so I felt it would be a privilege to join their ranks.

"As a Biddulph born and bred resident, I felt I could contribute, especially in the transport area."

The newly-elected Independent added: "I would not have wished to stand for any political party, had a vacancy arisen in that way.

"I feel that at a local level, local issues rather than national issues come first. My political views are between me and the ballot box, but they are very much middle of the road."



Photograph: Coun Lawton hopes to use his passion for transport to resolve the parking issues in the South Ward

Coun Lawton is also involved with the town's history society and has produced a book about the history of buses. Since retiring, he has volunteered at the library researching family history.

When asked what he sees as the main issue facing South Ward, Coun Lawton immediately referred to congestion caused by school parking.

"At times, congestion is so bad that bus companies miss out Park Lane altogether because they can't get the bus past," he explained.

"It is only the odd journey, but it indicates the issue. I hope as a town councillor I will be able to facilitate questionnaires and seek the feedback of residents for this issue on roads like Park Lane and Conway Road."