



Cabinet

Minutes of a meeting held at County Hall, Colliton Park, Dorchester,
Dorset, DT1 1XJ on Wednesday, 26 October 2016.

Present:

Robert Gould (Chairman)

Peter Finney, Robin Cook, Deborah Croney, Colin Jamieson, Jill Haynes and Rebecca Knox.

Members Attending:

Hilary Cox, as Vice-Chairman of the Council
Beryl Ezzard, County Councillor for Wareham
Paul Kimber, County Councillor for Portland Tophill
Daryl Turner, County Councillor for Marshwood Vale

Officers Attending:

Debbie Ward (Chief Executive), Richard Bates (Chief Financial Officer), Helen Coombes (Interim Director for Adult and Community Services - Dorset), Vanessa Glenn (Assistant Director for Care and Protection), Mike Harries (Director for Environment and the Economy), Jonathan Mair (Monitoring Officer), David Phillips (Director of Public Health) and Lee Gallagher (Democratic Services Manager).

For certain items, as appropriate:

Grace Evans (Principal Solicitor), Tracy Long (Library Service Manager), Matthew Piles (Service Director - Economy), Peter Scarlett (Estate and Assets Manager) and Andrew Shaw (Dorset Travel Team Service Manager).

- (Notes:(1) In accordance with Rule 16(b) of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules the decisions set out in these minutes will come into force and may then be implemented on the expiry of five working days after the publication date.
Publication Date: **Tuesday 1 November 2016.**
- (2) These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Cabinet to be held on **Wednesday, 16 November 2016.**)

Apologies for Absence

148 An apology was received from Cllr Andrew Cattaway (Chairman of the Council). Cllr Hilary Cox (Vice-Chairman of the Council) attended the meeting in Cllr Cattaway's absence.

Code of Conduct

149 There were no declarations by members of disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

150 The minutes of the meetings held on 28 September and 10 October 2016 were confirmed and signed.

Matter Arising

Minute 138 - Food and Feed Service Plan for Trading Standards Service Delivery 2016-17

The Cabinet Member for Adult Health, Care and Independence raised a concern in relation to the level of Deer poaching in West Dorset, which included the damage to

crops and gates, but more importantly with the rifles used bullets could travel miles if shots were missed and could kill. There had already been a number of reports of shot damage to sheds and green houses. It was noted that this issue linked with the work of the Trading Standards Animal Health Team, but enforcement was the responsibility of Dorset Police.

The Cabinet member indicated that this issue may be raised as a question at County Council. The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, and Children's Safeguarding agreed to progress it directly in her community safety role with the Police and the Interim Director for Adult and Community Services and provide a comprehensive response.

Public Participation

151 Public Speaking

There were no public questions received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(1).

There were eight public statements received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2). All of the statements related to minute 153 regarding the future of Wareham Foot Level Crossing.

Petitions

There was one petitions received at the meeting in accordance with the County Council's Petition Scheme, under minute 153 regarding the future of Wareham Foot Level Crossing.

Cabinet Forward Plan

152 The Cabinet considered the draft Forward Plan, which identified key decisions to be taken by the Cabinet on or after the next meeting. It was noted that an item was raised at the Cabinet meeting on 28 September 2016 for inclusion on the Forward Plan to provide progress on the introduction of family zones and work regarding the reorganisation of care and protection services, but was not yet included on the plan for 14 December 2016. Officers undertook to include the item following the meeting.

Noted

Future of Wareham Foot Level Crossing

153 The Cabinet considered a joint report by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways and the Cabinet Member for Economy and Growth regarding the options for the future of Wareham Level Crossing to provide a permanent solution to crossing the railway.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways introduced the report and explained that it represented the options to prevent complete withdrawal of the ability to cross at Wareham Station if the level crossing was closed by Network Rail, by enabling people to use a step bridge and ramps to maintain access to the town, taking into account safety as a paramount consideration.

Eight public statements were received at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 21(2) and are included as an annexure to these minutes. Three were presented at the meeting and a further statement was provided at the meeting by Cllr Keith Green from Wareham Town Council. The broad areas covered by the statements in addition to those included within the annexure included:

- Support for the retention of the existing level crossing;
- Opposition to construct a bridge that was out of keeping with Wareham;
- The level of traffic across the level crossing of over 500 per day (each way);
- The preference for automatic barriers to be installed;

- Impact of the A351 on crossing users;
- Time and effort required to cross using the ramps (especially for vulnerable and less able users), especially for train passengers having to cross for a ticket and return to the correct platform at the station; and,
- That the proposed scheme was not Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant.

In addition to the statements above, a petition was received at the meeting from Wareham Town Trust on behalf of the people of Wareham. Mrs Judith Price presented the petition on behalf of Mr Nick Fagan, the lead petitioner. Mrs Price highlighted that the petition had now received 3300 signatures. She clarified that the Town Trust did not oppose the road route, it supported the retention of the level crossing. She detailed a number of reasons to retain the existing level crossing which included:

- Planned housing development in the local area;
- The road route not being safe;
- Closure would diminish the rich and historic culture of Wareham;
- Impact on the vulnerable and infirm;
- Network Rail's responsibility to maintain a crossing;
- A need to protect the existing route;
- Other crossings between Wareham and Wool were automated;
- The need for preserved rights of way and cross platform connection;
- Recognition that current costs to maintain the crossing were not sustainable;
- Potential link with Swanage Railway and increased passenger use at Wareham;
- Access to buses was on one side of the station only;
- Step free solutions were desirable for passengers;
- Network Rail was required to consider safety improvements before closure;
- Technology improvements could be an alternative with many types of crossing available;
- 93.2% of the population of Wareham wanted to see the crossing maintained; and,
- There was no risk assessment of the use of the new structures in inclement or adverse weather conditions.

Cllr Beryl Ezzard spoke to the Cabinet as the local member for Wareham, and also submitted a letter in advance of the meeting, to express her support for the petition which represented 50% of the population of Wareham and objection to the removal of the level crossing as the life blood of the community. She highlighted the cost of using gatekeepers on the crossing for another year at £100k which was ineffective. She expressed concern that the proposed outcome would be unacceptable to the community and it was crucial for community wellbeing to be achieved and to be reassured that the vulnerable and less able would have a suitable crossing. It was further highlighted that Wareham Station was listed as 610th in a list of 6300 dangerous stations in the UK, so there were 609 more dangerous stations although there had never been a fatality at Wareham. Cllr Ezzard advocated the comments raised earlier in the meeting regarding DDA compliance and an automated system. In addition, she asked about the financial contribution of Network Rail to implement the proposed solution.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways indicated that this was a difficult matter as a decision to close the level crossing would be the responsibility of Network Rail and the Council was in the moral position of providing a suitable alternative, of which the step and ramps proposal was the only option, and there was an imperative to save money wherever possible. It was also clarified that there was very little or nothing the Council could do to influence the decision of

Network Rail to close the level crossing, but discussions would continue to negotiate the contribution towards the cost of the solution.

Members discussed the report and representations in detail and expressed their sympathy with residents' views to the practical problem of the level crossing, noting that the Council could not determine the closure or otherwise of the crossing, that the next steps would be for the County Council's Regulatory Committee to consider the planning application for the site after consultation with stakeholders including Wareham Town Council and Purbeck District Council, and that the responsibility for providing the ability to cross the tracks for rail passengers as a DDA requirement was ultimately Network Rail's responsibility. It was agreed that Network Rail's responsibility would be embedded into the resolution of the Cabinet to provide clarity, and for a progress report to be considered in due course.

The imperative to arrive at a suitable outcome was understood and it was suggested that the community be encouraged to continue discussions with National Rail. It was noted that as part of continued lobbying to South West Trains and Network Rail to increase frequency and connectivity in the area, the community's clear desire for a level crossing would be taken into account. Officers would also explore any potential opportunities with the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) and Network Rail, including rights of way options.

Through examination of the proposed steps and ramps, it was noted that in addition to the cost of £1m to construct, the work would be undertaken to the same standards as other infrastructure projects and would have low maintenance costs.

At the end of the discussion the Leader thanked all local people who had attended the meeting for their representations and acknowledged that the matter was passionately represented at the meeting.

Resolved

1. That Network Rail is requested to engage with the local community to find an acceptable solution taking account of the concerns of local residents.
2. That funds be made available to progress with the design and construction of ramps (subject to planning approval) at a gradient of 1:12 with resting platforms up to the existing over track footbridge crossing at Wareham Railway Station, and discussions continue with Network Rail regarding their obligation to provide a DDA compliant solution. This will provide a safe, accessible crossing at all times of day at the expressed desire line of Wareham residents.
3. That revenue funding be made available to fund existing arrangements until works are complete. On completion of this work the permissive rights would be extinguished and the existing pedestrian level crossing will be closed.
4. That a further report be submitted to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity to monitor progress.

Reason for Decision

This was a highly sensitive issue which unless resolved would have a negative impact on Wareham residents, particularly for those with protected characteristics. However, the Council could not replace like with like. Since the ORR notice was served in 2009 a permanent pedestrian access over the rail tracks had been sought by the Council and Network Rail but this had not been achieved. The current safety measures were no longer considered to be good enough and were only ever meant to be an interim solution. For this reason and because of reducing revenue budgets the status quo could not continue. The ramp option would remove the financial burden and safety risk of the attended crossing. The planned increased frequency of train services across the level crossing would mean more closures and therefore more delays to users. The ramped bridge would allow uninterrupted access over the tracks.

Panels and Boards

154 The Cabinet received the minutes of the following meetings:

Budget Strategy Task and Finish Group - 19 September 2016

154a **Noted**

Joint Public Health Board - 19 September 2016

154b The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, and Children's Safeguarding took the opportunity to update members on the following areas in relation to the work of the Joint Public Health Board:

Public Health Budget

The financial position of Public Health was summarised, and it was noted that the ring-fenced underspend, as a result of rigorous contract management and recommissioning, would be discussed to see how best the funding could assist with the corporate health and wellbeing objectives of Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Councils, with approximately £550k allocated to the County Council. Areas that could benefit were services relating to safeguarding and Prevention at Scale, which would influence a longer term positive outcomes and align with the Council's vision for the future.

Public Health England (PHE) Funding

Discussions were underway regarding the use of £2.3m held under specific criteria from Public Health England. The use of funding would need to align with the identified outcomes of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan regarding early help and Prevention at Scale agenda. This funding was also shared between Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole Councils.

Cllr Kimber asked a question in relation to the provision of local chemists, to which the Cabinet Member explained that the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was undertaking a Dorset wide review of GP and pharmacies to consider rationalising to ensure provision was in right place and part of local community delivery, as a holistic vision and strategy. She encouraged Cllr Kimber to raise this with his community and engage with the CCG review.

Noted

Renewal of funding for the Dorset Emergency Local Assistance Fund

155 The Cabinet considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Adult Health, Care and Independence in relation to the Emergency Local Assistance (ELA) scheme.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Health, Care and Independence explained that the scheme was designed in response to changes in the social fund provision nationally and had been running since 1 April 2013. It was available to adults and families for whom all other means of support had been exhausted and 7000 cases were supported in the last year.

Resolved

That the continuation of £200,000 pa funding for ELA from April 2017 to March 2019 be supported.

Reasons for Decision

1. To ensure those who were most financially excluded were supported through short term crisis, allowing them to maintain their health and wellbeing and their own accommodation.
2. To ensure those who needed more support to develop greater resilience were identified and offered support.

New Passenger Transport Contract Model

156 The Cabinet considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways regarding the contract arrangements for mainstream home to school transport, and supported public bus services which were due to expire in July 2017.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways explained that the new services must achieve targeted budget reductions, optimise resource use and rebalance the relationship between the County Council and transport operators. A detailed presentation was provided by the Service Director – Economy on the plans to transform transport provision, accessing services and joining up types of transport to use a much more holistic approach to deliver better outcomes and deliver savings.

Members acknowledged the scale of work and transformation of transport. Concessionary transport was raised as a particular issue, including the range of service provision across Dorset. It was noted that a report would be submitted to Cabinet on 14 December 2016 on the review of the National Concessionary Transport Scheme.

It was noted that more community transport networks were being created and benefitted from signposting to the relevant information. It was also recognised that the transport provision of partners was an area included in the future holistic review including the health service regarding access to hospitals and GPs, and conversations were underway with the Clinical Commissioning Group.

A question was asked in relation to the impact on vulnerable people in the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA). The Service Director – Economy confirmed that the EqIA was available, but more discussion was required with directorates as children and adult services were being transformed.

The challenges with getting people to work, training and accessing markets was raised as a crucially important economic factor, and that planning the transport model well in advance and marketing of the service was very important in order to link up with other organisations such as Network Rail, and would encourage more people to use public transport and open the network to a wider audience of potential customers. It was also acknowledged that ensuring the responsibility of transport contractors to market their services would be best as they were the experts, and it would serve as an incentive to reduce a dependency on subsidy from local authorities.

Members were supportive of the review and the future development to forge stronger relationships with partners and the business sector to look at transport provision differently, including walking and cycling.

Resolved

1. That reprourement of home to school transport services for implementation from September 2017 on terms to be agreed by the Service Director Economy after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways be approved.
2. That reprourement of public bus services for implementation from September 2017 on terms to be agreed by the Service Director Economy after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Highways be approved.

Reasons for Decision

1. To meet the authority's statutory duty in respect of home to school transport and to ensure an appropriate network of community and public transport was available.
2. To contribute to authority's corporate priorities of maintaining independence and promote economic growth.

Transfer of Corfe Castle Library - three year review of support payment

157 The Cabinet considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills on the current position and a review of the annual support payment to the Friends of Corfe Castle Community Library, and about the transfer of Corfe Castle library to community management in line with the decision of the County Council in July 2011.

The Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills highlighted the very successful programme and the positive relationship between communities running libraries and the professional services of the Council in supporting the network of community managed libraries including sharing of information, best practice, facilities and equipment. In relation to the transfer of Corfe Castle Library it was explained that the process was complex due to historical negotiation and continuation of the annual support payment of £1951 was intended to cover premises related costs and recognised the exceptional circumstances of lease arrangements. It was also explained that since the publication of the report the documentation and declaration for the transfer of the library to Friends of Corfe Castle Community Library Group was hopefully nearing completion. It was noted that the review of the support arrangements would be on a regular basis throughout the 3 year period.

Resolved

1. That the current position in relation to the negotiations to surrender the lease for the building with the Corfe Castle Village Hall Trust be noted.
2. That the continuation of the annual support payment of £1,951 to the Friends of Corfe Castle Community Library Group with a further review in 3 years' time be approved.
3. That future reviews of the support payment be delegated to the Director for Adult and Community Services after consultation with the lead Cabinet Member with responsibility for libraries.

Reason for Decisions

1. To implement the decision at County Council on 21 July 2011.
2. To implement the decision by Cabinet on 3 April 2013.
3. To contribute to the County Council's mission statement "Working together for a strong and successful Dorset".

The Community Offer for Living and Learning

158 The Cabinet considered a recommendation from the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 October 2016 which provided the progress with the Community Offer for Living and Learning. The report included an exempt appendix.

Members were updated by the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills on the Community Offer for Living and Learning and the development of pilot areas to develop front line service provision for localities, which would be characteristic of needs of local area, to extend the pilot areas into Wareham, and to seek support for a bid for funding. It was felt that Dorset was well advanced in comparison to other local authorities, and that the principles of the initiative aligned with a one public estate ethos.

The Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing and Children's Safeguarding advised caution in relation to the proposed timescales and financial savings target of £3.2m as plans could take longer than envisaged, although she fully supported the outcomes and direction of the offer. Assurance was provided that the arrangements relied in part on the reduction and disposal of redundant properties, and considerable progress had been made towards achieving the greater proportion of the £3.2m saving. However, it was recognised that the changes needed to continue to stimulate communities to ensure engagement, and the business plan objectives needed to be reinforced strongly and balanced against the level of engagement in order to achieve

timely outcomes.

Resolved

1. That bidding to and, if successful, committing to activity which is supported by the Cabinet Office and Local Government Association's One Public Estate Programme which may be above £0.5m in value, be approved.
2. That authority be approved to extending work to take in Wareham and that in the event that any other extension is appropriate that this decision is delegated to the Director for Children's Services and Section 151 Officer, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Organisational Development and Transformation.
3. That local members be consulted upon any development within their electoral divisions at the earliest opportunity.

Reason for Decisions

The approach was in line with the Council's vision of working together for a strong and successful Dorset, was part of the action required as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and contributed to the four corporate outcomes of Safe, Health, Independent and Prosperous.

Replacement of Sidney Gale House and construction of Bridport Connect Building, South Street, Bridport

- 159 The Cabinet considered a report by the Cabinet Member for Adult Health, Care and Independence regarding the delivery of the Bridport Hub building, now to be known as Bridport Connect. The report included an exempt appendix.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Health, Care and Independence provided an overview of the project to date to rationalise the property estate and to ensure that appropriate use of the land at the rear of Bridport Connect to be used specifically for facilities to provide health and social care, and/or affordable residential accommodation for the community in Bridport. It was also explained that the project was reported on a monthly basis to the Bridport Hub(Connect) Project Board.

Cllr Ros Kayes, as the local member for Bridport, submitted comments to the meeting to share her concerns about a lack of influence retained by the Council over the specific requirements of the development and use of the land. She highlighted that she would like to see an expeditious and successful development of a residential care facility, but was worried about the risks outlined in the report and asked that any sale contract to be as detailed as legally possible in terms of restrictions. It was highlighted that the course of action was arrived at as the issues regarding future use were not raised at an early enough stage for the normal procurement process to have been entered into.

At this point the Cabinet agreed to enter into exempt session (in accordance with Section 100 A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting as it was likely that if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public) to discuss the detail of Appendix 2 of the report and received a summary from the Legal Services Manager in relation to the arrangements for the development of the site as a land transaction, together with measures to provide the mitigation of risk.

Resolved

1. That progress with the Bridport Connect project be noted.
2. That the disposal of the land to the rear of the Fisherman's Arms site, on terms to be agreed by the Director for Environment and Economy, subject to a restriction on the title to prevent the land from being used for any purpose other than to provide health and social care and/or affordable residential accommodation to the local

community as agreed by Dorset County Council acting reasonably, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

The decision would contribute to the County Council's aims to:

- (i) promote health, wellbeing and social care;
- (ii) respond positively to the views expressed through the public engagement and consultation exercise.

Questions from County Councillors

160 No questions were asked by members under Standing Order 20.

Meeting Duration: 10.00 am - 12.20 pm

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Letter from Cllr Ezzard to Mr Mike Harries/Mr Peter Finney

As the DCC Cllr for Wareham, I will be attending the above meeting when the solution to the Pedestrian Level Rail Crossing at Wareham Station is being debated and hopefully resolved. I am disappointed and concerned that the Report No 9 has proposed an outcome that will be unacceptable to the majority of the Wareham community. I support the Petition signed by more than 3,000 local people, this represents 50% of the electorate of Wareham, as keeping the level pedestrian crossing is crucial for the Town's economic and the community's well-being, especially those living in Carey, Northmoor, and Northport. The local community need to be re-assured that the disabled infirm, cyclists, buggies and those travellers carrying luggage have a crossing that is easy and suitable for them.

To achieve the Town's right to keep its Level Crossing, there must be a compromise where all parties are satisfied in retaining it. The Risk Factor, which is gauged to be E4 by NR is I noted listed 610th of 6,300 level crossings in the UK that NR monitor. So there are 609 deemed more dangerous! WAREHAM HAS NEVER HAD A FATALITY! NR have in other areas, as stated by Judith Price's letter to you, a very well researched letter, have been swayed by the local community in satisfying a local need by keeping their level crossing, why not Wareham? I challenge DCC/NR to prove that there is not an alternative to their reported resolve to put in a ramped crossing at 1:12 which is not acceptable to 50% of Wareham's community.

To keep the Level Crossing, but to conform and satisfy the Office of Rail & Road (ORR), we the County Council & Network Rail must do it. However, I do not believe all the alternatives have, taking Wareham on its own merit, has been explored! Pedestrian Crossings that swing up as a bridge has been noted on other UK railways, Why not here? The electronic communication with Basingstoke Signalling system could be enabled for this to be put in place? There has been a failing to foresee a Plan "B" all along, which has left Wareham's community in limbo without a satisfactory outcome for 7 years. I believe DCC/NR should be more pro-active in resolving this with state of the art technology, used elsewhere in England.

Why are we treated as a poor relation when it comes to the train network in the SW line from London to Weymouth? DCC with SWT must question this thoroughly?

This has never been just a railway crossing, it is the lifeblood of WAREHAM which connects half of the residents; as stated in the reports 500+ use the crossing to go to the Town Centre; visit the Drs Surgery, shops & schools. The local Wareham Community have shown with this Petition of 3,000+ has shown what huge support there is for keeping the pedestrian level crossing and not to be fobbed off with an unsightly unsatisfactory proposition. It disputes the findings of the Reports outcomes; which have just gone over old ground – no new solution has been put forward, except a steeper 1:12 ramped structure; which will be long and difficult for some to climb in their buggies and the elderly to negotiate.

The common sense solution for the Pedestrian foot crossing is, as most townspeople have pointed out to retain the level foot crossing. I have suggested that the Wareham Town Trust apply for a new Right of Way some years ago, to explore this possibility! It appears to me that if the ORR & NR wish to impose restrictions on pedestrians using the Pedestrian Crossing, when it has existed for over 130 years, with no fatalities? In this case, it is in my opinion, a Duty of Care on NR/ORR to come up with another level solution! In the Report TAX PAYERS MONEY IS NOW TO PAY FOR THE NEW RAMPED CROSSING WITH Network Rail PAYING A PORTION? PLEASE INFORM THE MEETING

THE PROPORTION NR WILL CONTRIBUTE? THIS IS A SCANDALOUS SITUATION WHERE DCC ARE HAVING TO PICK UP THE TAB FOR AN UNSATISFACTORY AND EXPENSIVE SOLUTION, AGAINST LOCAL WISHES! This WILL RESULT in DCC money spent unwisely, when we have massive cuts in Government Funding?! The closing of the Level Crossing at Wareham, will have an enormous economic and horrendous effect on the wellbeing of the local people; lots of people will feel cut off, deprived of their independence to go to Town shopping etc. To those, even able-bodied, a ramped bridge will be a deterrent to shop in Wareham Town Centre, whom will in future, will take their cars or catch the bus to shop in Poole from the North side of the railway. Please, Cabinet Members support the locals of Wareham in their need to keep the level crossing at Wareham Station. This is a very emotive, serious issue, consider carefully....

Yours sincerely

Cllr Beryl Ezzard

DCC & PDC Member Wareham Division/ St Martin Ward

Cc to: Michael Tomlinson MP: Richard Drax MP

Public Statements - Item 9 - Future of Wareham Foot Level Crossing

Mr Wainwright, Residents of Wareham

CONCERNS

1. That Town not cut in half
2. For elderly, young, prams & pushchairs, wheelchairs, disabled, schoolchildren, passengers and all vulnerables
3. That both financial capital and maintenance & feasibility studies have been done by independent professionals of all options.
4. All alternative options have been scrutinised e.g.
 - a) Lifts at each end of existing bridge (per Southampton)
 - b) Current Poole crossing of main High Street
 - c) Existing underpass for Pedestrians and cyclists etc. at Wareham By-pass under the A351

Mr & Mrs Rushton, Residents of Wareham

We are unable to attend the meeting concerning the crossing point at Wareham Station on 26.10.16 and would like you to be aware of our objection to the crossing closing. We live in Northport & have family members in Northmoor to close the crossing would have a total negative impact on our lives.

We are alarmed to read that the recommendation is to close the crossing & prepare a revised design for ramps. If the crossing is closed first then the ramps will never be put in place the project has been dragging on for over 3 years now - the work that was started 18 months ago stopped with no solution found. Surely the ramps should be in place before the crossing is even considered for closure and this is the argument the council should be putting forward.

The rail network say the crossing is one of the most dangerous but all we see is the same video over & over of the woman with a baby in the pushchair whilst the decision she made that day was stupid beyond belief it does not tar us all. One of the alternatives put forward is to upgrade the flyover & use this to walk to Wareham. This option could only of been proposed by someone who has no idea of how busy the main road is during peak hours weekends & the holiday season and doesn't realise the danger of walking children along this route would be.

The rail company should be spending time sorting out the crossing at Wool & Poole high street.

I hope our comments will be noted and hopefully the right solution will be found for all concerned & not a quick fix at the expense of the people who use this vital link to town.

Mrs Maxine Humphries, Resident of Wareham

Inconvenience to people living on north of railway. Larger population north of Wareham (2009-1,348 residences) than in town (2009-1,250 residences). Extra houses proposed in new Local Plan. Closure of crossing will divide community further.

Cyclists/skateboards/disabled/pushchairs will have difficulty clambering over proposed long complicated ramps – will put more onto A351 road with no footpath over railway bridge - near misses seen when lorries and motor-cycles overtake.

Why is Wareham targeted for this monstrous structure? There are other more dangerous crossings nationwide.

Torture for rail travellers living north side to buy tickets on south side, carrying all their luggage over the bridge, then back again in time to catch train eastwards. What about disabled access?

Proposed ramped bridge will dominate landscape and is completely alien to existing listed footbridge. Why waste money on something which nobody wants, is ugly and will cause more trouble for everyone. Leave everything as it is!

Mr Robin Humphries, Resident of Wareham

- 1) My introduction, born Wareham 82 years ago returned there in 1967
- 2) There are many other Level Crossings more dangerous than this one. Wareham crossing has existed since 1847, with no known accident issues.
- 3) Comment on the Video clip of the laughing young lady with pram and child, crossing the main line.
- 4) Comments on the matter of Right of Way.
- 5) Comment on length of proposed bridge ramps and disincentives to use them.
- 6) Comment on problems to be faced by passengers buying tickets from the South side of the station.
- 7) Comment on the design appearance of the ramps on two Grade 2 Structures.
- 8) Comment on my opposition to Network Rail's proposals and possible alternate solutions.
- 9) Call for DCC Cabinet to reject the motion and to retain the existing crossing in some form or other.

Mark Howlett - On behalf of Wareham Chamber of Trade

I would like to register our total opposition to the proposed plans being negotiated between DCC and Network Rail for the closure of the crossing.

It is in our opinion that the level crossing has functioned perfectly for decades. There has never been an injury or accident at this crossing, and we believe the 'evidence' put before the public and authorities was inaccurate and flawed.

We are already on record opposing any closure, but just for some clarification these are the main points

ONLY ACCESS TO THE TOWN FROM NORTHMOOR AND CAREY

ANY FORM OF BRIDGE OR RAMPS WILL NOT BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

THE REPLACEMENT STRUCTURES THAT HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED IN THE PAST ARE TOTALLY OUT OF KEEPING WITH WAREHAM.

THERE IS NO EVIDENCE (PROVEN) THAT THIS CROSSING IS OR HAS BEEN DANGEROUS.

We fully accept that Network Rail support the fact they need to maintain a safe environment for all. However, with Wareham's safety record at this crossing, that no alterations need be made.

We therefore strongly request that the original gates are replaced, that the security guards are not required, and that let people traverse this crossing as they have done so for generations.

I would like to have attended the meeting to hear the discussions, but unable to.

On a personal note I would like to add the following comments.

I suffer from Parkinsons Disease, and I at times have difficulty with negotiating stairs etc. as it does impair my mobility at times. I would like to point out that Parkinsons is only one of many 'hidden' disabilities that people suffer. Also in recent times my wife suffered a badly broken leg, and I know how impossible it would be for us to get across the crossing at the moment if it were by bridge / ramps only. We REALLY do need a (safe) LEVEL CROSSING.
There is no alternative.

Victoria Copley, Resident of Wareham

I have lived in Wareham for more than 14 years, initially in the town centre and now on the other side of the crossing on Bere Road. Before I had my children, I regularly used the crossing with my bicycle to get access to Wareham Forest and beyond. Now that I have 2 school age children, we use our bikes on a daily basis to get to most places and rely on the crossing to get to school, the shops, library, the doctors, sports centre and to see friends and access other parts of Purbeck. When the crossing gate is shut, it is impossible for us to get over the bridge with bikes. The crossing is a vital link for many people with reduced mobility (whether that is physical or because they have mobility scooters, pushchairs or bikes, or just heavy shopping). And it is an important asset to enable people to reduce their car use in an already crowded part of Dorset.

We need a common sense, proportionate solution to enable us to continue to cross the railway, so please don't let us down!

We also need a solution that is in keeping with this part of Wareham and is an enhancement to the area. The current abandoned construction area around the bridge and crossing is neglected and shabby and a more attractive area which we can feel proud of is urgently needed.

Peter Tinsley, Resident of Wareham (and daily user of the level crossing)

I'm going to consider this from a cyclist's point of view, though the same issues apply to some extent to other groups unable to use the stepped bridge.

Dorset County Council sensibly promotes cycling on its website - particularly to school and to work. I'm not going to rehearse the arguments in favour of cycling, but will take these as read.

Part of encouraging cycling must come from road/street design – routes need to be attractive, convenient and safe to convince people to switch from cars.

The Wareham level crossing currently provides the most convenient, safest and shortest route for cyclists between Wareham town centre and residential areas north of the railway line. It is also part of the Northport Greenway cycle route between Wareham and Wareham Forest. The inconvenience of having to dismount for a short distance (just a few metres) and occasionally having to wait for 5 minutes (sometimes as much as 10) is outweighed by the greater inconvenience of having to lug a bike over the footbridge or cycle round via a narrow and busy road bridge – both of these options are especially unsuitable for children on bikes. Not surprising, then, that one of the largest groups of people using the crossing are cyclists (see survey results from March 2016).

If the decision is taken to close the crossing (though I note that a new full barrier level crossing has recently been installed at Norden) the replacement route needs to be at least as attractive, convenient and safe as the current arrangement or the effect will be to discourage cycling.

The proposed ramped access to the existing footbridge will have a slope of 1:12 which, it is suggested, is similar to the gradient on North Street. Such a gradient would not put off most cyclists (that's what gears are for) but pushing a bike, especially a loaded one, or with trailer attached, changes it from being an efficient means of transport to being a hindrance – add in a gradient and that becomes a deterrent. Those with light bikes will probably opt for carrying it up the steps, those who can't do this will have to push their bikes up and down the ramps or take the road-bridge. My feeling is that, after using the bridge a few times, the road option will look more attractive to cyclists but the experience of using the road at busy times (the school run, for example) will put off all but the most hardened cyclists, the net result being fewer bikes and more cars on the road and greater separation between the two halves of Wareham. Those that do take the road option will probably be at greater risk than those currently using the crossing.

Unless the ramped access to the footbridge can be made accessible to pedestrians and cyclists (using their bikes as intended) some serious thought needs to be given to providing a safe, attractive and convenient alternative route for the 20-25% (1300 per week) of current crossing users with bikes. Please note that the shared pedestrian/cyclist route under the Wareham bypass onto North Street has worked well for many years, including a short, narrow subway section with obstructed vision. Cyclists and pedestrians can share limited space safely.”

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