

Dorset County Council
Petitions Panel



1 September 2016

1. Background to the Petition Scheme

- 1.1 The County Council's Petitions Scheme was adopted on 29 April 2010 and came into effect on 15 June 2010. The Scheme was subsequently updated by the County Council on 21 July 2016.
- 1.2 If a petition is supported by 50 or more signatories then it will be dealt with by a small customer focussed panel. If a petition is supported by 1,000 or more signatories it will be scheduled for a debate at the next meeting of the full County Council.

2. Petition – losing of one of our local buses - the number 111

- 2.1 The County Council received a petition organised by Rosemary J. Rix on 25 July 2016. This reads as follows:

I am writing to you on the subject of the losing of one of our local buses- the number 111. Your latest literature on the subject, asked for comments by the 22nd of July 2016. Knowing how crucial this is to so many residents in this area, I went round only to the residential blocks in this area, Greystones, a Christchurch Community Housing Development.

On my travels around the blocks, collecting the signatures, I was told by many of the residents. That they really relied on that little 111 bus, as it stopped right outside the exit steps, and when they were done with their shopping, they were able to get off close to home. Many said that they were just unable to walk up the hill of Waterford Road to the other bus stops, and without the little 111, they would be virtually 'marooned' in their homes - and unable to get out shopping. Most of these folks, have to use canes, crutches, or other kinds of walking aids - and to carry shopping back, even for the few that can make it up the hill, is very difficult, if not impossible. You only need to look at the ages, where entered, on the list - to realise that this is an area of the older generation, most with no access to any transport, other than public transport. I only went round the blocks in the development where I now live, but there is a multitude of 'like people' in the surrounding district. Please do not forget the seniors, both in our area, and all around, when you make these decisions.

It has been noted also that you made your decision, and closed the book - as a done deal- well before the time was up for comments to come in, as per your own paperwork distributed.

It would be very gratifying, if you would consider the situation in which you are leaving the senior population, and how much greater the cost could be in the long run, and perhaps re-consider your Decision.

- 2.2 As this petition contains more than 50 signatures, the Panel are invited to note and discuss this.
- 2.3 This discussion should conclude with a decision as to how to respond to the petition. This may include one or more of the following:
 - taking the action requested in the petition
 - considering the petition at a council meeting

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- holding an inquiry into the matter
- undertaking research into the matter
- holding a public meeting
- holding a consultation
- referring the petition for consideration by the council's Audit and Governance Committee
- calling a referendum
- writing to the petition organiser setting out the Panel's views about the request in the petition.

2.4 Alternatively, the Panel may determine a combination of the options above, or decide on another course of action as appropriate.

3. Context

The contracts for services 111 and 24 in the Christchurch area terminated in July 2016. The county council's budget for supported bus services cannot provide the £161,000 support for these services to continue. The vast majority of bus services in the south east Dorset conurbation, including Christchurch, operate without subsidy. The county council, working with bus operators, sought a solution whereby these services could continue to operate without subsidy. A public consultation was held to establish travel patterns and needs; the results of which were shared with operators to inform service development.

Whilst elements of the 111 and 24 services have been retained as commercial services, the 111 service through Highcliffe has been withdrawn. Other services continue to operate in Highcliffe but are restricted to the main through route, Lymington Road. The petitioners are located in William Court, Waterford Road, Highcliffe. The distance to Lymington Road is approximately 400 metres. This is generally accepted as a reasonable walking distance to access a bus service. Many of the residents of William Court do not have their own transport and are unable to walk this distance due to age and/or disability. Where people cannot access public transport, community transport services can often provide the most appropriate solution; generally a door to door service.

An equalities impact assessment (EqIA), was undertaken to consider the impact of the proposals on those in our society who are protected by law. The assessment has identified that young people, older people and the disabled are most likely to be impacted. This found that people in Highcliffe may have difficulty accessing health related appointments. Community transport is able to mitigate some impacts of these proposals; especially for people with protected characteristics and those requiring access health related appointments. Dorset Travel has increased engagement with community transport schemes in the area, seeking viable, innovative ways of supporting these services. Through increased engagement and support, Dorset Travel will encourage community transport schemes that provide services for all ages and abilities. In Highcliffe there are two dial-a-bus schemes operated by Age UK and by the Christchurch Community Partnership. There are also two volunteer car schemes able to provide transport to medical appointments.

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4. Next Steps

4.1 The Panel is invited to note the receipt of this petition and decide how to respond to it.

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August 2016