

People and Health Scrutiny Committee

Date: Monday, 2 November 2020
Time: 10.00 am
Venue: To be held as a Teams Meeting

Chief Executive: Matt Prosser, South Walks House, South Walks Road,
Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1UZ (Sat Nav DT1 1EE)

**For more information about this agenda please telephone Democratic Services on 01305 or
Helen Whitby Telephone 01305 224187 or email helen.whitby@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk**

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1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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To receive the letter from Swanage Town Council, Public Questions and
Councillor Questions. Responses will be provided at the meeting.

Please ask for:

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Town Clerk

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TOWN HALL
SWANAGE
DORSET
BH19 2NZ

23rd October 2020

Dear Councillor Taylor

Access to emergency health services for Swanage residents

The Town Council has instructed me to write to you, as Chair of the new People and Health Scrutiny Committee, to raise its concerns about local residents' access to emergency health care. This has been copied to the other committee members for their information.

The Town Council thought it would be helpful to give some context regarding our situation and events to date, before making a number of requests.

Background

The Town Council has set up a Working Party to address the issue of access to emergency health services under the Clinical Commissioning Group's hospital reconfiguration plans, whereby maternity and paediatric services, oncology beds, and the local accident and emergency department, will be relocated from Poole Hospital to Royal Bournemouth Hospital. The remit of the Working Party is to consider mitigations for the longer travel times that residents of Swanage will face in emergency cases.

Swanage is a popular holiday resort at the end of the Purbeck peninsula, accessed via the A351, which becomes a 10-mile corridor between Wareham and Swanage. Swanage is 20 miles from Poole Hospital, 26 miles from Dorset County, and 28 miles from Royal Bournemouth Hospital. The A351 is a single lane road, and can be slow, particularly in Summer, as it winds through villages such as Corfe Castle on the way to Wareham. Our isolation is recognised in the adopted Swanage Local Plan. Paragraph 125 states: "Due to its isolated location the Swanage community is concerned about the potential loss of key services," while Paragraph 130 states that "Maintaining facilities and services in a relatively isolated location is one of the key challenges facing Swanage, and this is particularly true for a number of publicly-owned services which are currently located in the town."

South West Ambulance Trust data records the average blue light journey time from Swanage and neighbouring parishes to Poole Hospital at 41 minutes, and the average time between a category 1 imminent danger of death call to the Ambulance Trust, and arrival of the patient at Poole Hospital, at 1 hour 43 minutes – including ambulance response time, and handover time at the hospital. The Council believes that any rise in these times will increase clinical risk for patients facing medical, trauma or maternity emergency.

In autumn 2018 the Town Council wrote to Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee to draw attention to these concerns. The Council welcomed the Committee's decision to recommend to the Secretary of State that the proposals should be referred to an independent panel.

“A&E Local” at Poole, and Maternity at Dorset County

Whilst the Town Council recognises that the CCG’s proposals have now been approved by the Secretary of State, the Council’s attention was drawn to the possibility of implementing an ‘A&E local’ at Poole Hospital as a means of mitigating some of the increased risk for local residents. From the Independent Reconfiguration Panel’s report, it is understood that this is a ‘model between the standard urgent treatment centre and a conventional district general hospital A&E’, most likely operational for 16-hours a day. This would address the issue of chronic daytime congestion in the conurbation inhibiting access to RBH in an emergency from most of Dorset. On 14th February this year the Town Council wrote to Councillor Haynes, the then Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee Chair, in support of the “A&E Local” model for Poole Hospital, and we understand that this is due to be discussed.

Access to maternity care within reasonable times has been an issue of great concern to the Town Council. Dorset County used to offer newborn intensive (level 3) and high dependency (level 2) care, however in 2016 the unit was downgraded to offer special baby care services only (level 1). The reason given was there were not enough cases to maintain skills. However, with the loss of the maternity department at Poole, it is expected that more Purbeck mothers will choose Dorset County Hospital to have their baby. Under the current plans, the only high-level newborn services for the County will be located at Bournemouth Hospital, beyond reach of most Dorset mothers within the maximum ‘safe’ journey times cited by the Clinical Commissioning Group’s consultants of 30-45 minutes in maternity emergency.

The possible withdrawal of the Swanage Paramedic Car

Services currently remain open at Poole, however the issue of Swanage’s access to care in emergency became urgent earlier this year, when the Town Council heard that the ambulance resources based at Swanage might be decreased, as the Swanage Paramedic Car might be withdrawn. The ambulance resources based here are one 24/7 ambulance with two staff, and the Swanage 24/7 Paramedic Car, staffed by one paramedic. The Paramedic Car is the faster vehicle, and, unlike the ambulance, which can be outside Swanage taking patients to hospital, the car remains in Purbeck.

In an emergency, the car paramedic is most likely to get to Swanage within the Ambulance Trust’s target response time of 7 minutes, giving him or her the best chance to save life. In addition to maintaining life until the ambulance arrives, the paramedic can treat at the scene the 50% of patients who do not need to go to hospital, and s/he also supports Purbeck GPs with their home visits. The paramedic also continues to provide overnight cover for Swanage and neighbouring parishes. The paramedic car was allocated to Swanage in 2008 when the Cottage Hospital Minor Injuries Unit first closed overnight, in recognition of the distance from Swanage to Poole Hospital.

The Town Council was very surprised and concerned to hear about the possible withdrawal of the car, as Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee had previously received an assurance from the Clinical Commissioning Group that all ambulance services allocated here would be retained, and that travel times would improve, due to a new road network easing access to Bournemouth Hospital, and additional Dorset ambulance resources. Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee noted in the minutes of their 17th October 2018 meeting:

“In future it was anticipated by the CCG that ambulance times to the Royal Bournemouth Hospital (RBH) would be much quicker due to the major road improvements in that area and that this would assist in reducing ambulance journey times. The Group had also been promised that the Swanage ambulance station would remain open 24/7, fully manned with ambulances. There were also additional new ambulance vehicles in the pipeline for Dorset.”

Unfortunately, the spur road promised to ease access to Bournemouth Hospital from the west has since been cancelled, reinforcing the need for improved ambulance provision in remote areas such as Swanage.

The South West Ambulance Services Trust has advised that the funding for the Swanage Paramedic Car was due to end on 31st March 2020, and that the Ambulance Trust are prepared to maintain the Swanage Paramedic Car providing a funding solution could be found.

Following representations to Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee on 5th March, the Council welcomed the then Committee Chair, Councillor Haynes, offering to take this matter up with the Ambulance Trust, and with the Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group. The Town Council believes that it is at least in part due to this intervention that the car has not yet been withdrawn.

Whilst the Clinical Commissioning Group have promised to ‘engage’ with the Town Council, the Town Council has been unable, to date, to get an assurance that either the car will continue to be funded, or that there will be public consultation before any decision is made. A Swanage resident, Mr Melvyn Norris, Chair of the Swanage Area Forum, has started a petition to keep the Paramedic Car based here, which currently stands at 3,785 signatures.

Increased Dorset Ambulance resources

It is perhaps worth noting here that the Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee minutes of 5th March also note that Dorset ambulances are to increase from 36 to 45, with 2 of these new ambulances based in Dorset Council area. The Town Council has been advised that a second ambulance has been allocated to Wareham for 10 hours per day. However, the blue light journey time from Wareham to Swanage is, at an absolute minimum, 15 minutes, so that it will not be possible for the Wareham ambulance to respond to a Swanage emergency within the 7-minute target response time. Therefore, it is not clear, assuming Swanage is able to retain our current ambulance resources, how an additional part-time Wareham ambulance can mitigate the impact of loss of services at Poole for residents of Swanage and neighbouring parishes.

Requests of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee

Councillors were disappointed to hear that the Paramedic Car will not be on the 2nd November People and Health Scrutiny Committee agenda. Could you please confirm that it will be on the agenda for the following meeting of the Committee?

The Town Council is writing to request that the People and Health Scrutiny Committee continues, meanwhile, to make representations to the Ambulance Trust, and to Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group, in order to at least secure the retention of the town’s current ambulance resources.

The Town Council would also like to request that the Committee takes up the issue of further ambulance support for remote communities related to the planned loss of emergency and maternity care from Poole, and the issue of the promised road improvements, with a view to identifying any solutions that might help to reduce emergency journey times to Bournemouth Hospital.

Finally, at the time of writing, the Town Council does not know when the Committee intends to discuss “A&E Local”, or, indeed, maternity services; are you able to advise? Some advance notice would be of assistance to enable the council and neighbouring parishes to make representations.

Many thanks for your assistance in these matters, which are of deep concern to our local community.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. K. Agnew', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Town Clerk

Councillor G. Taylor
Chair of the People and Health Scrutiny Committee, Dorset Council

By e-mail and cc. to all committee members

Public Questions

Question from Tina Foster of Swanage

The withdrawal of the Swanage Paramedic Car

The Town Council was very shocked to hear this year that the Ambulance Trust are considering withdrawing the Swanage Paramedic Car, meaning that, contrary to the commitments made by Dorset CCG to Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee, Swanage would lose half of its allocated ambulance vehicles, and a third of ambulance staff.

Due to my recent experience of having to use the service, I am deeply concerned that this must not happen. I had to call 999 when I discovered my husband collapsed and apparently not breathing. The paramedic car was with me within minutes giving me reassurance, with the ambulance following soon afterwards. The crew checked my husband before taking him to Poole hospital. The paramedic was able to ring the local Doctors surgery to obtain useful information on my husband.

This meant that with the ambulance away for at least an hour and a half, the paramedic car was still available for other emergencies. Under the Clinical Services Review, the ambulance would be out for longer still, due to the distance to Dorset County or Bournemouth.

Swanage is at the end of a ten-mile corridor. An ambulance coming from the next Town, Wareham, cannot possibly get here within the 7 minute response time recommended for category 1, imminent danger of death, emergencies.

A Freedom of Information Act request raised by Langton Matravers Parish Council to the Ambulance Trust showed that, over a 13 month period, the average time between receipt of a category 1 call from Swanage and villages, to arrival of the patient at Poole, the nearest Hospital, was 1 hour 43 minutes.

A further request showed that the average blue light journey time from all BH19 postcodes, to Poole Hospital, is 41 minutes. Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group's Consultants cited expert opinion that 30-45 minutes is the maximum 'safe' journey time in an emergency. Under the Clinical Services Review, Swanage and villages will no longer be able to access care within these 'safe' times. The Ambulance Trust state it will take 8 minutes longer to get to Dorchester, and 19 minutes longer to get to Bournemouth, giving total journey times of around 50 and 60 minutes respectively once the ambulance has come.

At the Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee on 17 October 2018, Cllr Ray Bryan reported that the Clinical Commissioning Group had promised that the Swanage ambulance station would remain open 24/7, fully manned with ambulances. Major road improvements around RBH were offered to reduce journey times but have failed to be implemented.

Would the Committee please ask Dorset CCG to come to their next meeting to assure the Committee that the promise to at least maintain existing Ambulance resources allocated to Swanage will be honoured?

Question from Carol Finch of Swanage

The withdrawal of the Swanage Paramedic Car

In 2018 the Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee considered whether to refer the Clinical Services Review plans to the Secretary of State. Cllr Bryan reported that he had been assured by Dorset CCG that ambulance resources would be increased to more remote areas.

Under the CSR plans, Swanage and villages face the longest journeys in an emergency, due to the loss of A&E, Maternity, & emergency Paediatric care from Poole. Currently, Swanage has an Ambulance, and a Paramedic Car. The Car was allocated to Swanage in 2008 when the Cottage Hospital Minor Injuries Unit closed overnight, to increase emergency cover, given the distance to Poole. Thus, it is a matter of life and death that Swanage at least retains our existing ambulance resources.

The Paramedic Car is a fast vehicle, which stays in Purbeck, as it does not take patients to hospital. It fulfils a number of functions including:

- Preserving life until the Ambulance arrives
- Treating the 50% of patients who do not need to go to hospital
- Covering overnight while the Swanage MIU is closed
- Supporting Purbeck GP visits during the day

After hearing that the car was going to be withdrawn, the Chair of Swanage Area Forum started a petition. It has, to date, 3,807 signatures.

Thanks in part to support from this Committee, the Car has not yet been withdrawn. However the threat of withdrawal hangs over us from month to month, and Swanage Town Council has had no assurance of its retention.

The 5th March Health Scrutiny Meeting notes state that:

"The Chairman confirmed that assurance had been given previously that the Swanage Ambulance Car would not be removed, that 6 new ambulances would be activated in Dorset and that there was no intention to remove cover from the Swanage area. Members were concerned about the withdrawal of the promised level of cover in Swanage as timely treatment could be crucial.

The Chairman would formally write to the Chief Executive of SWAST to ask him to account for this change and copy this to the CCG Chief Executive. She would circulate any response received. If the response was not adequate, she would invite the Chief Officers to come to a future meeting."

On 9th March Swanage Councillors met Senior Officers of the Ambulance Trust, who said that the Paramedic Car would only be maintained if Dorset CCG allocated additional funding for it.

As Dorset CCG promised Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee that ambulance resources to remote areas would be increased, could the Committee please ask Dorset CCG to account for the threatened loss of half the ambulance vehicles allocated to Swanage, and a third of the staff?

Question from Avril Harris of Swanage

Matters raised by Parish and Town Councillors to Health Scrutiny

The withdrawal of the Swanage Paramedic Car

The future of the Paramedic Car based in Swanage remains uncertain from month to month. Swanage Town Council has been unable to secure any assurance from Dorset CCG that the Paramedic Car will be maintained or that there will be public consultation prior to a decision being taken about it.

At the meeting of Dorset Health Scrutiny Committee on 5th March it was confirmed that the Committee had been told by Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group that Ambulance Resources allocated to Swanage would be fully maintained and this is recorded in the minutes of the Committee of 17.10.2018, at point 38.

The then Chair committed to contact the CCG and SWAST, and to call the Chief Officers to the Committee, if a satisfactory response was not received. SWAST has confirmed that it is willing to maintain the Paramedic Car if a funding solution is found.

Would this Committee, as a matter of urgency, please honour the promise of holding Dorset CCG to account, because the Swanage Paramedic Car could be removed before this Committee meets again, and discuss this matter at your next meeting?

A&E Local

Swanage is a popular but remote holiday resort at the end of the Purbeck peninsula, 20 miles from Poole Hospital, 26 miles from Dorset County, and 28 miles from Royal Bournemouth. The average blue light time to Poole is 41 minutes, and the average time from an imminent danger-of-death call to the Ambulance Trust to arrival at Poole Hospital is 1 hour and 43 minutes.

Under Dorset CCG's Clinical Service Review plans, Swanage's local accident and emergency department will be relocated from Poole to the Royal Bournemouth. Longer journey times will increase risk for seriously ill patients. There are 1,400 emergency admissions annually to Poole from Swanage and villages.

To mitigate this increased risk, and to reduce increased pressure on Dorset County A&E, four Town Councils (Swanage, Weymouth, Portland, and Bridport) and four Parish Councils (Langton, Worth, Corfe and Arne), wrote to Dorset Health Scrutiny early this year to request support for an "A&E Local" at Poole Hospital.

From the Independent Reconfiguration Panel's report, this is a "model between the standard urgent treatment centre and a conventional district general hospital A&E", most likely operational for 16 hours a day. This would address the issue of chronic daytime traffic congestion in the conurbation which inhibits access to RBH from most of rural Dorset.

The former Chair committed to discuss this matter in November, but it is not on the Agenda. Could the Committee please give a date when this matter will be discussed?

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People and Health Scrutiny Committee - 2 November 2020

Questions from Councillors

Questions from Cllr Jon Andrews

1. I am concerned that the continued closure of the Sherborne Yeatman Hospital Minor Injuries Unit in Sherborne will become permanent. The service is vital to residents of Sherborne and the rural Sherborne residents. It is also putting undue pressure on the already stretched surgeries in Sherborne, Yetminster, Milborne port and Cerne Abbas. People are now using surgery nurses as a substitute as the alternative signposted is either Shatestbury hospital or Dorchester hospital. I am sure this has also resulted in ambulance calls. Chris Loder keeps asking questions about an opening date but keep getting fobbed off by the Dorset Health trust CE.

My question is when will the Yeatman and other MIU's in Portland and Blandford that are currently closed be re-opening?

2. During the early stages of the Pandemic the Matron of the Yeatman Hospital left her post to take up another position. We in Sherborne now share a Matron with Blandford Hospital. Is it the intention to fill the vacant post of Matron at the Yeatman, If so when as these posts were deemed full time prior and during the pandemic and now we are in the second spike are probably more key now that strong leadership not part time leadership is required, after all we don't have a part time CE or is that the next step?

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