

Rapid Response Vehicle - Purbeck/Swanage Car

Introduction

Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and South Western Ambulance Service (SWASFT) started to review the Rapid Response Vehicle service to ensure any future provision fully met the needs of local people; however, as the pandemic took hold this work was suspended, and the NHS moved into a level 5 major incident response. Assurances were provided that the service would continue until such point that the review could recommence, and a public engagement exercise be undertaken.

We are now able to resume this work and wish to give the Committee an update before we commence wider engagement.

Background

In 2008, Swanage Community Hospital's minor injuries unit (MIU) moved to daytime opening.

At this time the ambulance service had a rapid response vehicle (RRV) in operation across Purbeck for 12 hours a day. With additional funding from the CCG, this service was increased to 24-hours.

This investment allowed for the Purbeck Community Paramedic Service to be established. This RRV service then became better known as the 'Purbeck/Swanage Car'.

The Purbeck Car currently supports elements of both 999 and primary care community response.

Thirteen years on, national developments and local investment into the ambulance service means we think now is a good time to work together on the way forward to ensure we are making the best use of the resources available.

Current situation

From 2019, South Western Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWASFT) was provided an additional £1.8m investment from the CCG to improve services. SWASFT was able to recruit additional emergency care assistants and paramedics across Dorset.

For Purbeck, it means there are now three emergency ambulances, known as Double Crewed Ambulances (DCA), based in the area instead of the previous two, helping patients get the right response first time without having to wait for additional transport if they need to get to hospital following a 999 call. In addition, there is also the Rapid Response Vehicle (RRV), known as the Purbeck/Swanage Car.

There is also an increase in vehicle and workforce hours in towns surrounding Purbeck, such as Dorchester, Poole and Bournemouth. This means Purbeck ambulances are less likely to be drawn away from the areas and means that additional 999 resources can be drawn into the Purbeck area if needed when Purbeck's emergency response teams are taking patients to hospital or attending incidents.

The future

We want to make the best use of the current available funding – which will continue – for the best outcomes for patients. This is not about withdrawing funding for services. In fact, we have been clear that sustaining the RRV alongside other ambulance resources may well be the right thing to do

for Purbeck. Working with our partners we are developing an engagement and communications plan to enable people to give their views on how best to use the funding in the future.

Once finalised, it is anticipated that listening opportunities will take place over the next three months.

A pre-engagement listening event took place with members of Swanage Town Council on 25 May and a similar event has been offered to Wareham Town Council.