

Statement from Debby Monkhouse, Lead Cllr, Emergency Health Services Working Party, Swanage Town Council

Rapid Response Vehicle – Purbeck/Swanage

The Town Council has received a letter from Richard Drax MP stating he has met the DCCG CEO, and DCCG propose to withdraw the 'tethered' 24/7 Paramedic Car from Swanage, and 'replace' this by adding 14 hours to the 2nd Wareham ambulance, located 10 miles away, and currently funded for 10 hours a day. This proposal would mean a substantial reduction in the availability of an emergency response here.

A SWAST response to Langton Parish showed, over 13 months, that the average time from a Swanage category 1 imminent danger of death call to the Ambulance Trust, to arrival of the patient at Poole Hospital, was 1 hour 43 minutes. With the planned loss of A&E, Maternity and Children's units from Poole, Swanage will be approaching 30 miles, much of it on congested country roads, from emergency hospital care at Dorchester or Bournemouth. The further hospital care is moved away, the greater the need for an available and fast life saving response here in Swanage.

Unlike the Paramedic Car, which is a fast 4x4, that does not routinely take patients to hospital, and which supports Purbeck GP home visits, so is 'tethered' to base, ambulances are routinely out of base in use across the county. Even if an ambulance is available at Wareham when there is an emergency in Swanage, it cannot get here within the 8 minute target response time that gives the best chance to save life.

Promises have been made by DCCG regarding the emergency response resources based in Swanage. In 2008 the 24/7 Paramedic Car was allocated in perpetuity, as recompense for the overnight closure of urgent care at Swanage Cottage Hospital. Dorset Council Health Scrutiny minutes of 17th October 2018 contain a commitment from DCCG to Dorset Council that, in the context of the planned loss of A&E, Maternity and Children's care from Poole, Swanage Ambulance Station and the emergency response vehicles and staff based here would be fully maintained (p5 para 1). The same minutes suggest that there would also be additional Purbeck-based ambulance cover.

Summary tables provided by the Ambulance Trust show 1,875 Purbeck call outs of a Paramedic Car over a year, with more than half of call outs being category 1-3 emergencies, the most serious. There is higher overall use, category 1 use, and category 1-3 use in Swanage than in the rest of Purbeck.

To give an example, there is a 4 year old Swanage child who stops breathing periodically. The parents have to perform life saving CPR until a Paramedic arrives. When this has happened, there has never been an ambulance available within 10 miles, but on each occasion that their child has stopped breathing, the Paramedic Car has arrived in minutes to take over her care.

Could Dorset Council People and Health Scrutiny Committee please ask DCCG to honour the commitment made to fully maintain the existing ambulance resources based in, and tethered to, Swanage, in order to protect this isolated community's many vulnerable residents?

