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Dear Sirs

Improving Dorset's Healthcare Consultation Response

Thank you for inviting the Town Council to respond to the Improving Dorset's Healthcare consultation document, which was discussed at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 20th February 2017 for the specific purpose of formulating a response to this consultation. It was agreed at that meeting to respond via a letter rather than the consultation form, partly because the Council did not feel that the consultation documents provided enough information to enable a detailed response to be made to each of the questions asked. It was also felt that the issues were too complex to answer with a simplistic tick box format and that reliance on answers gathered by such a system could form entirely the wrong understanding of people's actual response. The Council therefore requests that this letter be treated as a formal consultation response.

A number of the proposals set out in the document have caused significant anxiety amongst local residents, and the Town Council shares many of these concerns, as set out below. The Town Council is the only elected body with a responsibility to represent the views of the people of Swanage and therefore these comments relate directly to the impact of the proposals in the consultation document on local residents.

Two of the greatest concerns relate to the proposed reduction in the range of services currently provided by Poole Hospital, and their transfer to the Royal Bournemouth. The isolation of Swanage, which sits at the end of a 10-mile cul-de-sac from Wareham, is widely recognised, as is the high level of congestion on roads between Swanage and the conurbation. In these circumstances the preservation of both A&E and maternity services at Poole, rather than Bournemouth is of the utmost importance to residents in Swanage and Purbeck.

More than 8,000 signatures have been gathered in Purbeck in support of a petition against the downgrading of Poole A&E and maternity services, 4,000 of which are from Swanage residents. The petition has been presented to the Dorset CCG.

It is feared that the loss of full Accident and Emergency Services at Poole would place lives at risk by reducing the chance that patients will reach hospital in the all-important 'golden hour' following a life-threatening incident. Page 29 of the travel time analysis provided as part of the consultation documents indicates a 15-20 minute increase in travel times if these services are focussed in Bournemouth.

Whilst the travel time evaluation set out on page 32 of the main consultation document suggests that a greater proportion of Dorset's residents can access services at Bournemouth more quickly than at Poole, this is not consistent with some of the evidence set out in the more detailed travel time analysis document. For example, the table on page 6 of the latter demonstrates that a higher proportion of the population can reach services at Poole within 30 minutes and that the maximum time for all the

population to reach the services there is 10 minutes quicker than at Bournemouth. This suggests that there is a case to preserve full A&E services at Poole General Hospital.

The impact of increased travel times will also be felt by expectant mothers who require urgent hospital care. It is recognised that complications at birth can lead to serious life-limiting conditions and that delayed transfer to hospital care threatens to increase such instances in Swanage and neighbouring parishes. This proposal will also make it almost impossible for local families to drive themselves to the nearest maternity hospital in the early stages of labour given the limitations to the local road network set out above. The concern in this area caused by the proposed loss of more local maternity services cannot be overstated.

Overall, although page 15 of the main consultation document states that the CCG see 'travel time as a key evaluation criterion for future service delivery', this does not appear to have been the case in relation to the people of Swanage. This will not only impact on the patients themselves, but also on their carers and families; those reliant on the much-reduced public transport network may well be unable to visit their seriously ill relatives, which will in turn have a negative impact on their recovery.

The concerns over the proximity of these services to Swanage are underpinned by serious doubts over the efficiency of the local ambulance service in reaching Swanage patients. Incidents in which ambulances have taken 45 minutes or more to reach Swanage patients are widely known by local residents. The case of a 96-year old lady who collapsed in the main shopping street and had to wait in the torrential rain for $\frac{3}{4}$ hour for an ambulance to arrive was reported in the local press in October 2014 and a similar incident was experienced last week. The Town Council now intends to raise this matter directly with the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, and it is imperative that the CCG also does so, whether or not the consultation proposals go ahead.

The Town Council welcomes the proposals to retain our excellent Community Hospital in Swanage, which together with our medical practice will constitute one of the county's seven community hubs with beds. The services provided at Swanage Hospital are prized by the Purbeck community and the Town Council looks forward to seeing these develop further over coming years.

However, the Council is concerned at the loss of beds at Wareham Community Hospital and the possible impact that this will have on the resources available at Swanage. Whilst the Council welcomes the overall aim to care for people in their own communities, the Council has serious doubts over the capacity of the system to deliver high-quality care in people's own homes. In order to determine whether this is deliverable the Town Council requests further information about how this could be achieved in Purbeck, and how this improved level of care would be financed. This information should be considered in detail prior to any decision being made about a reduction in community hospital beds in Purbeck.

Whilst writing I would also add that the Town Council recognises that it has an important role to play in promoting the health and wellbeing of local residents. The Council maintains most of the open spaces in the town, supports many of the town's sports' clubs and recreational facilities and can fund health-related projects via its grant making powers.

The Town Council has recently entered into a tenancy agreement with Dorset Wildlife Trust for use of its former plant nursery as a therapeutic garden for those with mental health problems and has made a grant of £5,000 towards the employment of an Admiral Nurse to improve dementia care in the town. The Town Council therefore welcomes any opportunity to work with partner organisations to achieve the CCG's aims of improving prevention and self-help within the community.

Yours faithfully

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