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Town Clerk

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TOWN HALL
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27th March 2020

Dear Mr Wenman

Proposed Removal of Ambulance Car from Swanage

At the Town Council meeting held on Friday 20th March 2020 it was reported that the ambulance car was being removed from service in Swanage as of 1st April. I am writing to urge you to reconsider this decision further to a unanimous resolution deploring this proposed course of action.

As you may be aware, although Swanage is the largest town in the former Purbeck District, it is also an isolated community, being located at the end of a 10-mile cul-de-sac from Wareham. Local residents, very many of whom are elderly, feel this sense of isolation intensely. This is recognised in the local development plan, adopted in 2017, which states that ‘maintaining facilities and services in a relatively isolated location is one of the key challenges facing Swanage’.

Even with the ambulance car at Swanage ambulance station response times have been poor. There have been a number of occasions over recent years when frail elderly patients have fallen and been left lying in the road or on the pavement for an unacceptable amount of time (in excess of ¾ hour). Where a fatality has occurred this has affected Swanage families very deeply. In this context I’m sure you will understand that the news that the Ambulance Service has taken a unilateral decision to take action that is likely to make this situation worse has been received very badly.

During recent consultation on the reconfiguration of local hospital services Members felt that they had received assurances that there would be no reduction in local ambulance services. Although this Council has continuously objected to the proposed closure of A&E at Poole General Hospital, the presence of the ambulance car at Swanage ambulance station was seen as providing some mitigation against the risks created by the additional travel time for local residents to reach emergency care at the Royal Bournemouth Hospital. At the Council meeting one councillor stated that he would feel ‘betrayed and deceived’ if this service is removed, especially as it had been understood that any proposed changes would be the subject of public consultation.

I’m sure that you can understand that in the midst of the current pandemic, local concerns are even more pronounced. If you were to confirm that this resource is to be taken away from this community at the current time it will be extremely damaging to morale and public confidence in local health services, at a time when all communities need reassurance that help will be available when it is needed.

The Council is also extremely disappointed that it has received no direct communication from South West Ambulance Service on this issue. We have been led to believe that the ambulance car is being withdrawn as from this coming Wednesday, 1st April and therefore urgently request reassurance that this will not take place whilst the decision is reviewed.

Thank you for your time in considering this letter and I look forward to hearing from you as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

Martin K. Ayres

Town Clerk

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