

Iain Lynch - Farnham Town Clerk

From: Iain Lynch - Farnham Town Clerk
Sent: 24 July 2023 15:55
To: TicketOffice.SWR@transportfocus.org.uk
Subject: Proposed Staffing Changes at Farnham Railway Station

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I am writing on behalf of Farnham Town Council in response to the current consultation that is being undertaken by SWR to proposed station staffing changes as they will affect Farnham. At the outset, Farnham Town Council would like to acknowledge the customer service of the ticket office staff and the contribution the station staff make to passenger safety and the local environment.

Whilst it is understood that similar changes are being proposed across all of England that will result in the closure of all station ticket sales offices the proposed consultation period of 21 days with a closing date of 26th July is very short. These changes are significant and will particularly affect the elderly and less able including visually impaired. A longer consultation period would have been more appropriate to allow detailed Equality Act Assessments to be prepared for each station. On the face of it up, it appears the Equality Act will be breached by the proposals particularly as some 20% of the UK population is disabled.

It is, however, accepted that some change is necessary to reflect changing passenger trends with the number of tickets purchased through ticket offices reducing from 82% in the 1990s to 12% of which 99% could be purchased through Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) which have been installed at virtually at all stations. The greater use of digital technology and the internet for ticket purchases requires changes to be made as it has in other industry sectors (e.g. banks, supermarkets).

Farnham Town Council (FTC) welcomes the proposed training to enable all staff to undertake a wider range of functions including sale of tickets – this is very positive. FTC is, however, very concerned that the times at which staff will actually be present at Farnham station will be significantly reduced. As a Category 3 station Farnham station there will only be staff present during the morning until 1245 hours and will be unstaffed during afternoons and evenings and all day on Sundays.

The latest published statistics for the year ending 31st March 2022 reveal that there are an estimated 930,506 passenger entries and exits at Farnham of which 158,082 entries and exits are by regular passengers travelling on season tickets. Farnham is a relatively well used station with 4 trains per hour (2 trains per hour on the service between Alton and London Waterloo and 2 trains per hour between Farnham and Guildford).

If these proposals are to actually be implemented then FTC believes that Farnham should be staffed for a much longer period covering all the afternoons and early evenings to provide general assistance to all passenger and ensure full accessibility to facilities at the station.

It would also be necessary for the installation of an additional accessible ticket vending machine (TVM) on the Alton bound platform since the existing 3 TVMs are all located on the London / Guildford bound side of the station. In addition, all TVMs must be able to offer the full range of discounts (eg 50% wheelchair user discounts only available at ticket offices) and be fully accessible (with tactile buttons and usable at an appropriate height for wheelchair users) and generally easier to use prior to any staffing changes.

Help points will need to be easily accessible and well-signposted for assistance whenever a member of station staff is not available, and there should be a clear and effective response with trained staff who understand the needs of people with disabilities, for any queries on made via help point. Recent research has shown that only half of such requests for help have been effective.

Iain Lynch

Iain Lynch
Farnham Town Clerk



Winner Council of the Year 2021
National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Star Council Awards

Finalist: Clerk of the Year 2021
National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Star Council Awards