

## BRITISH TELECOM CONSULTATION ON THE INTENDED REMOVAL OF 10 PUBLIC PAYPHONES WITHIN THE DISTRICT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has been consulted by British Telecom (BT) on a proposal to remove a total of 10 Public Payphones from within the District of which 1 is located within the National Park and 9 are located outside the Park. The Council is able to raise objection to the removal of any of these payphones, provided such objections can be justified by reference to specified criteria and whilst having regard to the interests of telecommunication providers. It does not relate to the removal of the call box.
- 1.2 This report gives details of the consultation exercises that have been undertaken and provides an assessment for each of the 10 payphones affected in light of the responses received. Approval is sought to issue a decision notice which identifies 3 payphones which the Council wishes to be retained. Once issued, the decision notice is published and submitted to BT and the Secretary of State. BT has a right to challenge the Council's decision through an appeal process.

### 2. DETAILS

- 2.1 A schedule of all the payphones BT wish to remove is attached to this report at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 The call boxes that BT has proposed to remove within the National Park and outside the National Park are identified by numbers 1 to 10.

### 3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1 BT has displayed a notice on each call box to tell the public:
- i) that BT is planning to remove the payphone
  - ii) the name of the Local Planning Authority to whom people can send any comments (within 42 days)
  - iii) a Freephone number people can call to find out the next nearest phone box
- 3.2 In addition, all affected Parish Councils and Local Members have been consulted on BT's list of proposed payphones to be removed. They have also been advised of BT's scheme whereby individuals or community groups, including Parish Councils, may 'adopt' a call box for £1. The 'adopt a box' scheme is a matter for the individual or organisation that wishes to adopt the call box and BT itself. The scheme has no bearing on the recommendations in this report, however it has been mentioned under the 'Parish Council Response' section of the assessment if a Parish Council have informed us of their wish to adopt a box.
- 3.3 In response to consultation the Council has not received any letters from local residents in relation to any payphones. The following Parish Councils have responded to the consultation:

Parish/Town Council	Payphone Number	Comments
Ringwood Town Council	(01425) 479839 (box 3)	Objection: on the basis of the demographics of the area, it is in a well positioned and visible area close to local shops and serves areas of social housing. It is further considered that it is more important than ever for the public to have access to a telephone given the current Covid-19 pandemic.
Hythe and Dibden Parish Council	(023)80846278 (box 7)	Object - the number of calls suggest a need, mobile phone coverage is patchy, the PCB is located on a school route and it should be available for use by students in an emergency
	(023) 80845038 (box 8)	Object – the number of calls demonstrate a need to retain
	(023) 80845093 (box 9)	Object - on the grounds of the demographics of the area – there is a large estate nearby with number of rented and social housing units.
Fordingbridge Town Council	(01425) 656687 (box 2)	Fordingbridge Town Council has no objection to the removal of the payphone at Roundhill, Fordingbridge.  Would that entail removing the booth as well as the phone as that would be the Town Council's preference?

3.4 The following Local Members have responded to the consultation:

- 3.4i) Cllr Jill Cleary – no objection to the removal of the payphone in Drake Close, New Milton (No.4)
- 3.4ii) Cllr Malcolm Wade - My view is that I wish the three telephone boxes in Hythe and Dibden to remain. There could well be the need for an emergency phone call to be made and not everyone has a mobile so. With the current economic climate during the pandemic this is even more critical. (Nos. 7,8 &9)
- 3.4iii) Cllr Stephanie Osborne – reflects the views of Cllr M Wade
- 3.4iv) Cllr Alex Wade – I would like to object to the removal of the phone box in my ward (No.8) due to the following reasons.
  - 1. The phone box is located very close to housing for older residents, and those on lower incomes who may not have access on a regular basis to a mobile phone. In particular the flats above the shops and next door which are include a significant mix of rented housing
  - 2. If there was an emergency situation and there was no access to a mobile or poor reception, then the use of the public phone would be vital.

3. The location is central to a well-used area of the community, with a nearby row of shops, woodland for dog walking, hospital and doctor's surgery. It is regular thoroughfare for the local schools and should there be any urgent incident this pay phone could be utilised.
  4. The site has seen occasional car accidents and asbo incidents where a call to the emergency services has been required, and if there is no access to a mobile phone then a pay phone would be vital in these incidents.
- 3.4v) Cllr Edward Heron – Objection to the removal of the phone box in Damerham  
- I would be surprised if there had been any calls as the phone has not been working for a year or more despite local attempts to get it fixed. I would also add that regardless of Ofcom's stance, mobile phone coverage is very poor and this is the location used for the local school buses. Would add that the box is close to Council and Housing Association houses.

#### 4. ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The following factors are of relevance in assessing whether any of the payphones should be retained:
- i) Usage. How many times has the payphone been used in the last 12 months
  - ii) Emergency calls. What is the likelihood that the payphone may be required in the case of an emergency to contact services? Is the call box near a traffic accident black spot?
  - iii) The demographic of the area. Does the social composition of the area indicate that a payphone may be required for residents who cannot afford their own home phone or mobile phone?
  - iv) Mobile phone coverage. What is the quality of mobile phone provision for making voice calls?
- 4.2 All of the payphones have been assessed using these criteria and the conclusions are set out in the document attached at **Appendix 1**. The assessment takes account of the consultation responses received although in one case, makes an alternative recommendation.
- 4.3 In summary, the assessment **identifies three call boxes** which it is considered necessary to retain as follows:
- i. Junction of Butlers Lane and Gorley Road, Ringwood BH24 1TJ
  - ii. Fairview Drive, Hythe SO45 5GY
  - iii. Outside 52 Netley View, Cedar Road, Hythe SO45 3PG

#### 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no relevant financial considerations for this consultation.

**6. CRIME & DISORDER, ENVIRONMENTAL AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are none.

**7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 That the Council issues a decision for publication which raises objection to the removal of the 3 call boxes identified in the assessment at Appendix 1.

**8. PORTFOLIO HOLDER ENDORSEMENT**

**I have agreed to the recommendation of this report.**

**Sign: CLLR E J HERON**

**Date: 28 October 2020**

**For further information contact:**

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**Background Papers:**

List of relevant payphones and  
accompanying email from BT

Date on which notice of this Decision given – 28 October 2020

Last date for call-in – 4 November 2020