

Council Motion proposed by the Liberal Democrat and Labour Groups for Full Council on 26 July 2023

Council notes with concern the announcement by the Rail Delivery Group that train companies are pressing ahead with plans to close up to 1000 rail ticket offices across England over the next 3 years, including those in Bishop's Stortford, Hertford North, Hertford East, Sawbridgeworth, Ware, Stanstead St Margarets and Watton-at-Stone.

Council believes that ticket offices provide a vital service to residents in East Herts District and support passenger safety, security and accessibility. Having a clearly sign-posted place in the station for people with ticket enquiries provides certainty and confidence for customers who may struggle to otherwise locate station staff and also acts as a point of safety for passengers. At many stations, access to facilities such as toilets and waiting rooms is reliant on ticket office staff.

Not all residents are able to use station ticket machines or online ticketing platforms. Many journeys require human assistance to ensure customers purchase the most appropriate and cheapest tickets, and do not incur penalties or pay more than necessary for their journey.

Council is concerned the closure of ticket offices will disproportionately affect elderly and disabled residents in East Herts District – as well as those with poor literacy and IT skills or on lower incomes.

Council notes the statistics from Age UK that 3 million elderly people in the UK do not have access to the internet, and statistics from the Royal National Institute for Blind People that only 3% of those with partial or full sight loss feel able to use ticket machines.

Council is also concerned about the possible implications for current station staff and the risk of staff redundancies – given that there will be no regulations for minimum staffing levels at stations and on platforms. Council therefore resolves to:

- Instruct the Leader of the Council to write to Mark Harper MP Secretary of State for Transport, and the Chief Executive of the Rail Delivery Group, expressing Council's opposition to the possible closure of staffed rail ticket offices – and in particular the offices at Bishop's Stortford, Hertford East, Hertford North, Sawbridgeworth, Ware, Stanstead St Margarets and Watton-at-Stone: and also expressing opposition to the closure of ticket offices at Tottenham Hale as these would have impact on East Herts Residents when travelling.
- Instruct the Leader of the Council to write to Greater Anglia, Great Northern, Thameslink, and Southern rail expressing the Council's opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket offices at Hertford East, Hertford North, Bishop's Stortford, Sawbridgeworth, Ware, Stanstead St Margarets, Watton-at-Stone and Tottenham Hale.
- Instruct the Leader of the Council to send copies of the letters mentioned above to our local MPs, Ms Julie Marson and Mr Oliver Heald, asking that they should write

similar letters, expressing their own opposition to the proposed closures.

- Invite the Leaders of all the Political groups on the Council to also sign the letters which the Leader of the Council sends if they so wish.
- Request that all councillors respond to the consultations to confirm their support for ticket offices remaining open and for properly staffed rail stations.

Motion proposed by Cllr Chris Wilson and seconded by Cllr Nahum Clements.