

## **COUNCIL – 19 JULY 2023**

### **ITEM 11 – NOTICE OF MOTIONS – URGENT MOTION**

The Mayor has accepted as an urgent item of business the following motion, relating to the proposed closure of almost all staffed railway ticket offices in England, including Stevenage. Consideration of this motion cannot wait until the next scheduled Council meeting as the statutory consultation period for representations regarding the proposals will close on 26 July 2023.\*

*\* Please note that the time taken to debate this urgent motion will not affect the 90-minute time slot for consideration of the three motions previously submitted.*

#### **SAVE OUR LOCAL RAIL TICKET OFFICES**

To be moved by the Labour Group.

“That Council notes with dismay the news that the Department for Transport and the 13 train operating companies it manages have announced plans to close almost all staffed ticket offices in England, totalling nearly 1,000, following changes to the Government’s guidance relating to ticket office opening hours and operation. Statutory Consultations began on 5th July and will close on 26th July.

Council believes that our ticket office provides a vital service to residents in Stevenage and support passenger safety, security and accessibility. Having a central place in the station for people requiring advice and assistance 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 ticket vending 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 from mis-booked tickets. Ticket office staff have a wealth of knowledge which ensures that customers get appropriate advice for their whole journey.

Council is concerned the closure of ticket offices will disproportionately affect disabled, Deaf and older residents in Stevenage – as well as those with poor literacy and IT skills or on lower incomes. Council also notes the possible implications for current station staff and believes that the closure of ticket offices could lead to a de-staffing of rail stations.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, expressing Council’s opposition to the possible closure of staffed rail ticket offices – and in particular the office/s at Stevenage Railway Station;
- Instruct the Chief Executive to write to Network Rail expressing the Council’s opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket office/s at Stevenage Railway Station; and
- Request that all councillors respond to the consultations before 26th July to confirm their support for ticket offices remaining open and for properly staffed rail stations.”