



EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

Council Offices, East Court, College Lane, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 3LT

Web site: www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk E mail: townclerk@eastgrinstead.gov.uk

Tel: (01342) 323636 Fax: (01342) 327823

Town Clerk: Mrs J W Holden IRRV (Hons) EDMS PSLCC

Your Ref:

My Ref: JH/Clerk/Consultation responses

When calling please ask for: Mrs J Holden

29th August 2023

Transport Focus
Freepost: RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ
Transport Focus
PO Box 5594
Southend-on-Sea
SS1 9PZ

By email to: ticketoffice.GTR@transportfocus.org.uk

Dear Sirs

The East Grinstead Town Council is pleased to reply to the consultation regarding the proposals to close ticket offices and replace these with roaming staff (on the platforms).

We are not in favour of the proposals as we feel that the complexities of ticket pricing needs support which cannot be well provided on a platform where the passenger or the official may be rushed.

The train is a lifeline for many, both in terms regular commutes and days out but the need to speak to the Ticket Office is regular either for advice, issues and to understand best routes and prices. When the ticket office is unmanned travellers stand around confused and stressed trying to find someone who can help. This can create long queues at the ticket machines with people getting impatient and becoming rude, but it is created because the machines support straight forward journeys and day passes, but anything complex with changes is a minefield; this is where the ticket staff are incredibly helpful and knowledgeable.

Passengers travelling same day to purchase a ticket, will have had to purchase before they can access the platform, therefore may well have been confused or delayed in trying to establish the ticket wanted.

East Grinstead has an aging population and many of our residents are not, in their words "Tech Savvy" and therefore not comfortable using the electronic machines, they struggle to understand and use them. We see this play out daily in the town Car Parks, with older people needing to be helped to work the machines and therefore a change to the rail travel to this system we fear will result in some residents simply stopping to use the Train.

This same group have serious fears about Card fraud and many still feel much more comfortable being able to 'hand over cash' for their payments. Many do not like getting a card out in public and entering a PIN for fear of fraud. Many would not identify a "tampered with machine" nor be alert to distraction theft.

We have recently moved a long way forward with making our station accessible to those with disabilities, with the introduction of the new lifts and bridge but I fear that moving to machines only, will once again, create complications to travelling for those with disabilities, no one to talk to if you're blind or sight impaired. Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson has spoken of the difficulty in wheelchair users being able at the correct height to use the machines and the apps again are not the answer for many casual railway users.

We want to encourage Tourism as a means of ensuring our Town gets stronger and our High Street and places of attraction remain successful and currently a lot of new visitors seek advice from the Ticket Office on entering our Town - where to go, transport links etc without this visitors will arrive into an empty hall which is not at all welcoming or helpful.

We understand that the proposal is to remove the ticket office and put the staff on the platforms. We would suggest that if the staff were instead inside the ticket hall at the point of sale to help with the machines and give advice that this may go some way to addressing some of the concerns.

From the point of view of staff welfare, being on their feet and open to all weathers on the platform does not sound like a very comfortable working environment. The staff more visible on the platform are more vulnerable without physical barriers.

Again it would seem that the ticket office does far more than issue tickets and we feel that there is no need to remove this service from most main line stations and we would certainly recommend retention in areas such as East Grinstead which are the start/end of the line and many passengers need ongoing travel advice.

We trust that these comments are useful and will help in shaping the future of the service provided at our railway stations.

Yours sincerely

Julie Holden
Town Clerk
East Grinstead Town Council