

Report subject	Pokesdown Railway Station
Meeting date	11 February 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>On 11 January 2022, the Council approved a contribution of up to £2.6m towards the Pokesdown Railway Station Improvement Project.</p> <p>The original scope was expected to include replacement, or upgrade of the station building, a new forecourt with interchange facilities, CCTV and help point improvements, seating and shelter improvements in addition to converting the existing lift shafts to passenger use and repairing and painting the footbridge and canopies (all subject to available budget).</p> <p>The project has not been delivered, detailed timescales and costs are undetermined, and the expected scope has been reduced to the lifts and canopies over the platforms only. At the same time, the cost of borrowing has increased.</p> <p>In consideration of the above a recommendation is sought from Cabinet regarding the council commitment to the project.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <p class="list-item-l1">a. Cabinet recommends to Council withdrawal of the offer of a £2.6m contribution to the Pokesdown Railway Station Improvements project.</p>
Reason for recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approval for the contribution was 4 years ago. The annual repayment for borrowing the contribution has increased from £140k per year in 2022 to over £195k per year in 2026. This means that a total of £9.75m would now be paid by the council across the next 50 years if it continues to part fund the project.2. Supporting the project would create a £55k per year additional pressure for the cost of borrowing. Withdrawing the council's financial contribution to this project would therefore in-effect create a £195k per year saving helping the council to safeguard statutory (essential) services.3. The proposed scope of the project has reduced.

	<p>4. As of January 2026, whilst there has been email correspondence stating that the total budget has been increased there is no firm assurance from partners that the project is deliverable within the available budget.</p>
Portfolio Holder(s):	<p>Councillor Mike Cox – Deputy Leader of the Council, Vice-Chair of Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Finance</p> <p>Councillor Andy Hadley – Cabinet Member for Climate Response, Environment and Energy</p> <p>Councillor Richard Herrett – Cabinet Member for Destination, Leisure & Commercial Operations</p>
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton – Chief Operations Officer
Report Authors	<p>Richard Pincroft – Head of Transport and Sustainable Travel</p> <p>Claire Clark – LTP & Capital Programme Manager</p>
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision and Information

Background

1. The provision of lifts at Pokesdown Station was one of the obligations in South-Western Railways (SWR) 2017 franchise agreement with the Department of Transport (DfT). Subsequent detailed surveys of the existing lift shafts indicated however that their conversion to passenger use to the latest standards would be significantly more complex and expensive than originally envisaged.
2. SWR's 2017 franchise agreement was replaced by a new National Rail Contract with the Department of Transport (DfT) in May 2021. This reconfirmed a funding contribution from SWR towards the provision of lifts at the station, subject to third party funding being confirmed to meet any shortfall.
3. The estimated total cost for the works in November 2021 was £5.7m with the SWR and Network Rail (NR) committed to funding £3.1m between them.
4. On 11 January 2022 the Council approved a Cabinet recommendation from the 24 November 2021 meeting for an allocation of up to £2.6m from BCP's Future Fund for improvements to Pokesdown Railway Station through a jointly agreed financial arrangement with Southwestern Railway (SWR) and NR effectively addressing the identified shortfall.
5. The original scope was expected to include replacement, or upgrade of the station building, a new forecourt with interchange facilities, CCTV and help point improvements, seating and shelter improvements in addition to converting the existing lift shafts to passenger use and repairing and painting the footbridge and canopies (all subject to available budget). This was all set out in the Business Case in Appendix 1 and advised that the benefit cost ratio (BCR) for delivering the above

would be 2.46 (high) compared to just delivering the lifts which would be 0.88 (poor) at 2021 costs.

6. The focus of the investment was to provide access benefits to all users at the station, particularly for wheelchair users and any persons with limited mobility through the delivery of operational lifts from street level down to the platforms. There would also be benefits for many others, for example persons with large or heavy luggage and young children.
7. The Business Case contained no details regarding how many disabled passengers would use the station if the lifts were installed, it just advised that there were typically 350,000 entries and exits per year.
8. Between April 2024 and March 2025 there were 377,104 entries and exits at Pokesdown Railway Station compared to 2,664,456 at Bournemouth and 965,090 at Poole. The station has not been considered a high priority for NR's Access for All funding due to a combination the low usage compared to other stations nationally and the station not being an interchange.
9. In 2023, following completion of the outline design for the scheme, the estimated cost of the works had risen beyond the available £5.7m budget. During 2023/24 an additional £1.0m of funding was earmarked for the project by SWR/NR increasing the budget to £6.7m.
10. Conceding that removing and replacing the lift shafts completely alongside the other improvements was not an affordable option, SWR/NR decided to revisit refurbishing the existing lift shafts to reduce costs.
11. In Spring 2025, structural testing of the existing lift shafts proved that they could be strengthened and refurbished. During summer/autumn 2025 an outline design was developed and a cost estimate undertaken indicating that the cost of the revised scheme was £7.19m.
12. To try and bring the scheme back within the available budget of £6.7m, SWR/NR descoped more items and sourced additional funding to overcome the £490k deficit. The updated scope would just comprise the lifts, works to the platforms to provide safe access to and from the lifts and a canopy to cover the platform between the lifts and the existing main canopies.
13. In November 2025, there was a further update from SWR/NR informing the council that due to a complication with the lift mechanism specification there would need to be a redesign of the structure to accommodate the motor housing and therefore there would be a 5-month delay completing the design.
14. At the end of November 2025 officers updated the Cabinet leads for the programme and given the time that has passed since the initial approval of the contribution, lack of progress by SWR/NR over the past 4 years it requested that the future commitment to the project be debated at Cabinet and Council.
15. Options discussed were as follows:

	Option description	Outcome/notes
1	£2.6m - contribution in line with January 2022 Council Decision	Subject to NR/SWR managing the project within budget could lead to the delivery of the lifts from 2027 onwards. £195k per year pay back
2	£1.85m - reduced contribution to offset the council incurring increased costs due of inflation between 2022 and 2026	Unlikely that NR/SWR would source an additional £750k. Not possible to reduce scope to create deliverable option within budget, hence, scheme would be deferred by NR/SWR. £140k per year pay back
3	£0 – withdraw capital contribution.	Project not deliverable unless NR/SWR or DfT fund. Council to continue to offer officer resource to work with NR/SWR to develop a future Access for All application. £0 per year pay back

16. In response to a repeated request from the council at progress meetings for assurance that the project is still deliverable owing to the reported estimate of costs exceeding the available budget, on 19 December 2025 the SWR Regional Development Manager wrote via email to the council advising:

- SWR has allocated a further £0.273m from the current financial year to progress the redesign for the new lift technology bringing the total budget to £7.023m.
- Network Rail remain confident that the scheme can be delivered within the original £6.75m budget despite the change of lift technology.
- there are in practice four risk pots:
 - NR risk allowance set out in Quantitative Cost Risk Assessment – £495k
 - Contractor risk pot for contractor owned risk values - £334k
 - Network Rail Fee Fund – each scheme pays a % fee into the overall national fund as a form of insurance and the costs for Pokesdown are included in the estimated costs
 - Industry Risk Fund

The *Industry Risk Fund* and *Network Rail Fee Fund*, the *Risk Funds*, are as set out in the Office of Rail Regulation 'Investment Framework Consolidated Guidelines' October 2022. The guidelines identify risk allocation for rail industry schemes, and that these funds will allow the cost of certain events to be met that would otherwise fall to the promoter of an enhancement scheme and so without them would pose a barrier to investment in the rail network.

The Risk Funds have been developed to contribute towards the funding of contractual liabilities and rail industry systemic risk. The funds are applied to schemes promoted by 3rd parties. 3rd parties pay a small percentage of the total

value of their project into the Risk Funds that then gives access to the whole fund should a risk materialise that meets the criteria for settlement from the funds.

The Network Rail Risk fee is designed to cover Network Rail's potential liabilities when delivering enhancement works and services for third parties (e.g. Network Rail default). The Industry Risk Fee covers the liabilities taken by Network Rail for low-probability, high impact industry risks such as the impact of an operational emergency elsewhere on the network which adversely affects a scheme.

17. The email also requested that the BCP legal team be mobilised to ensure engagement between it and SWR legal team ahead of April 2026 when SWR expect the final costs to be confirmed. This is to ensure contracts are approved and signed to enable expedient mobilisation thereby avoiding increased costs because of delay.

Summary of financial implications

18. The annual repayment for borrowing the contribution has increased from £140k per year in 2022 to over £195k per year in 2026. This means that a total of £9.75m would be paid by the council across the next 50 years if it continues to part fund the project.
19. Supporting the project would create a £55k per year additional pressure due to the increased cost of borrowing. Withdrawing the council's financial contribution to this project would result in a £140k per year saving helping the council to safeguard statutory (essential) services.
20. The council Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) currently has £116k allocated to the Pokesdown Station Railway Project in 2027/28. The reason for this being less than £140k is that not all the borrowing would be incurred during year 1 of the construction phase. This means in the context of the MTFP the actual saving ahead of 2027/28 financial year would be £116k if funding for the project is withdrawn. Conversely, if the £2.6m funding is not withdrawn and the project supported then there would be a MTFP pressure of £79k in 2028/29. If the council committed to £1.85m (as per Option 2), then then there would be a MTFP pressure of £24k in 2028/29.
21. The council understands that SWR/NR has spent at least £1.6m developing a design for the delivery of lifts at Pokesdown. Included within this spend is the development of outline design drawings in line with the business case appended in the 2021 Cabinet report that when costed were found to substantially over budget.
22. The Business Case in Appendix 1 of the November 2021 Cabinet report advised that the benefit cost ratio (BCR) for just delivering the lifts would be 0.88 (poor) at 2021 costs.

Summary of legal implications

23. The Council is not contractually committed to the Pokesdown Railway Improvement Project and may lawfully withdraw its offer of funding (of last resort). No legal agreement has been entered into with SWR or NR and accordingly, withdrawal does not give rise to contractual liability or compensation.
24. Any decision to support the project would require the Council to enter into a formal legal agreement governing funding, delivery, risk allocation, and liability. The decision to recommend withdrawal has been taken having regard to changed

financial circumstances, reduced project scope, uncertainty as to deliverability and the Council's fiduciary duty to safeguard public funds.

Summary of human resources implications

25. There are 2 x BCP officers engaging with SWR/NR monthly, hence, the impact on resources is minimal.
26. If the council continues to support the project with the £2.6m contribution, then in the coming year(s) more resource from legal and finance will be required to agree a contract between the council and SWR/NR. This would be funded from the £2.6m contribution.
27. If the council decides to withdraw the £2.6m contribution, then the officers could work with SWR/NR to prepare an Access for All application for submission during future application windows.

Summary of sustainability impact

28. The delivery of lifts at the station would undoubtedly increase the accessibility of the station for some residents and visitors that are currently unable to do so and would therefore encourage more sustainable travel.
29. Conversely withdrawal of the funding from the project could help to safeguard statutory services.

Summary of public health implications

30. The delivery of lifts at the station would undoubtedly increase the accessibility of the station for some residents and visitors and may therefore encourage them to walk or wheel to the station improving their health.
31. Conversely withdrawal of the funding from the project could help to safeguard other statutory (essential) services that could provide larger public health benefits.

Summary of equality implications

32. An EIA Screening is attached as Appendix A. In summary, the proposed withdrawal of funding will have a future negative impact because it will delay the installation of lifts for passengers that need to use them at the station until alternative funding can be sourced.

Summary of risk assessment

33. No significant risk implications have been identified with regards to the withdrawal of the contribution. There is still the potential for the project to go ahead if SWR/NR can source the required funding from other sources.

Background papers

BCP Cabinet Report 24 November 2021: [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Cabinet, 24/11/2021 10:00](#) – report starts on page 117

BCP Cabinet meeting minutes 24 November 2021 - [Minutes Template](#)

BCP Council meeting minutes 11 January 2022: [Minutes Template](#)

Appendices

A – Equalities Impact Assessment Screening

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Equality Impact Assessment: Conversation Screening Tool

[Use this form to prompt an EIA conversation and capture the discussion. This completed form or if needed, a full EIA report (form 3) will be published as part of the decision-making process ***Please delete prompts before publishing**]

The Council is legally required by the Equality Act 2010 to evidence how it has considered its equality duties in its decision-making process.

The Council must have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to -

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

A link to the full text of [s149 of the Equality Act 2010](#) which must be considered when making decisions.

1	What is being reviewed?	Impact of the withdrawal of BCP Councils £2.6m funding towards the Pokesdown Station Lift Improvements
2	What changes are being made?	There could be no improvements (installation of lifts) at the station in the short term to medium term (unless funding is secured from other sources). This means that there will be no change from the current situation at the station.
3	Service Unit:	Planning & Transport
4	Participants in the conversation:	Claire Clark - LTP & Capital Programme Manager Alexis Edwards – Transport Development Management & Policy Manager
5	Conversation date/s:	07/01/2026
6	Do you know your current or	Passengers that are wishing to either catch a train from

	potential client base? Who are the key stakeholders?	Pokesdown Station or alighting from a train at Pokesdown Station and need lifts to be able to access the platforms.
7	Do different groups have different needs or experiences?	<p>Disability The proposed withdrawal of the council funding will mean that the current situation remains the same. There will be no provision of lift access for passengers that need them to use Pokesdown Station and this is therefore considered a negative impact.</p> <p>Socio-economic status The proposed change will not affect the use of the station from a gender perspective.</p> <p>Gender The proposed change will not affect the use of the station from a gender perspective.</p> <p>Age (young/old) There will be no provision of lift access which could benefit some younger and/or elderly passengers using Pokesdown Station and this is therefore considered a negative impact.</p> <p>Pregnancy and Maternity Pregnant women may be less mobile due to pregnancy and/or due to the impact of having given birth and/or sleep deprivation. This could arise at any time before, during or after pregnancy including whilst on maternity leave. There will be no provision of lift access for passengers that need them to use Pokesdown Station and this is therefore considered a negative impact.</p>
8	Will this change affect any service users?	The current facilities will remain the same for those currently accessing the station e.g. requiring use of stairs to alight/depart from the station. This is therefore considered a negative impact.
9	If the answer to any of the questions above is 'don't know' then you need to gather more evidence.	
10	What are the benefits or positive equality impacts of the change on current or potential users?	There could be positive equality impacts on the withdrawal of the council funding for the lifts as the funding will be used to safeguard essential council services that will benefit a larger number of residents than those that would benefit from the council funding

		the Pokesdown Station Lift Improvements.
11	What are the negative impacts of the change on current or potential users?	There will be no change to the facilities for current passengers at Pokesdown Station. The negative impact is that there will be no improvement in the provision of lift facilities for those with mobility impairments and this may discourage people with mobility impairments from travelling by rail.
12	Will the change affect employees?	No, unless they are mobility impaired and travel to work via Pokesdown Station.
13	Will the change affect the wider community?	There will likely be a positive impact on the wider community as there will be more funding available for essential council services that benefit a larger number of residents than those that will benefit from the council part funding the Pokesdown Station Lift Improvements.
14	What mitigating actions are planned or already in place for those negatively affected by this change?	There is still the opportunity for alternative funding to be sourced by the rail operator, or government to progress the lift improvements at the station at some point in the future. The existing general arrangement will remain the same.
15	Summary of Equality Implications:	<p>The proposed withdrawal of BCP Councils funding towards Pokesdown Station Lift Improvements will have a negative impact locally because there will be no provision of lift access for passengers at the station.</p> <p>The funding (when taking account of the interest payments relating to the borrowing) if utilised towards essential council services across the conurbation over a number of years would likely benefit a larger number of residents including those with protected characteristics.</p>