

Donhead St Andrew – The Case for a Village Defibrillator

Introduction

Purchasing or leasing a defibrillator for the village has already been discussed at a Parish Council meeting in July 2017. Since then, a site has been offered next to the Forester Pub, which is approximately in the centre of the village. Therefore, it was thought that it was worthwhile considering again:

- Is there is a need?
- Which system?
- What funding could be available?

1. Need

If someone has a cardiac arrest (a child or an adult) it is said that the first 10 minutes are critical. The chances of recovery are diminished by 10% for each minute after the cardiac arrest. Carrying out CPR alone gives very little chance of the patient recovering. Employing a defibrillator promptly may increase the chance of recovery by up to 60%. It would be very fortunate for an ambulance/paramedic to come from Shaftesbury to a house in the village within the 10 minutes, especially if they were already committed or one was coming from further away. I know from recent personal experience how long it can take to get an ambulance for a serious emergency on a busy day. Lately, the ambulance service seems to have been stretched on many days. The paramedics are brilliant, professional and highly capable when they arrive. There just does not seem to be enough of them to meet current demands.

Therefore, with a village defibrillator a life or lives could be saved. Conversely, without one a life or lives could be lost.

2. Which system

I spoke to five different providers. Two of them (British Heart Foundation & South West Ambulance Trust) insisted that the cabinets for the defibrillator must be unlocked. Two providers (St Johns Ambulance & Heartsafe) recommended that the cabinets should be locked. The fifth provider (Community Heartbeat Trust) would facilitate either.

I came to the conclusion that it would be best for the patient and the volunteer responder if the cabinet was unlocked (as long as the equipment could be insured).

I thought that the system known as “Managed Solutions” by the Community Heartbeat Trust provided the best option (see attached leaflet).

- Unlocked cabinet – quick access & no need for mobile phone use outside the cabinet for codes
- Insure and replace if stolen or damaged
- Liability insurance
- Train volunteers
- Monitor the governance (checks on working order)
- Equipment good for up to 10 years
- No VAT

£1,675 plus the cost of an electrician to fit the cabinet.

3. Funding

Grants are possible (but not certain) from the Wiltshire Area Boards. The village of Crockerton last year received a 50% grant (£1,680) for 2 defibrillators. Amesbury has an application pending for a 50% grant (£733) for one defibrillator. It is likely that any organisation would need to provide funds for 50% of the cost to have a chance of a successful application.

In providing a defibrillator, parallels can be drawn with having house insurance. A sum is paid out each year, hoping that it will not be needed. But it is vital if it is.

Although, there may not have been a case of cardiac arrest in the village in recent years, who can predict what may happen over the next ten years in the village or with the high numbers of customers, who visit the Forester.

4. Conclusion

- There is a case for a defibrillator being needed.
- There is an offer of a site in the centre of the village, which would facilitate it being quickly available to villagers nearby in Lower St, Cross Rivers, New Road, Wardour Lane, Scotts Hill, Mill Lane and the Forester. For other villagers, access could take longer but, without one, the alternative would be much longer.
- With the possibility of a 50% grant, the total cost could be as low as £900.

- The defibrillator would be in an unlocked cabinet (insured) with no delay caused by the need for a code or the use of mobile phones.

The village of Motcombe has a defibrillator. Tollard Royal and East Knoyle both have one in a telephone box. Donhead St Mary is planning to do the same. There are two 24 hour public access defibrillators in Shaftesbury. The two dentist practices nearest to Donhead St Andrew have defibrillators. Clearly, these organisations consider them worthwhile.

There are likely to be at least six people in the village willing to be trained to use the defibrillator.

There could be first aid training for residents separately as well.

I should be grateful if the Parish Council would consider again funding or part funding a defibrillator for the village, so that there will be one available for any unpredicted emergency.

Colin Eves

16th March 2018