

Westminster Memorial Hospital Working Group Update

Summary of the Public Meeting held on Thursday 27th July 2017

at the Town Hall, Shaftesbury

The meeting was attended by approx 60 members of the public.

The Mayor of Shaftesbury, Cllr John Lewer, opened the meeting, welcomed the attendees and introduced the Chair of the WMH Working Group, Cllr Anthony Austin who would be Chairing the meeting.

Cllr Austin outlined the reason for the meeting which had been formally agreed by the WMH Working Group in that there would be a public meeting following the publication of the Statistical Analysis of the Public Consultation returns. The ORS produced their report – some 300 plus pages of statistical breakdown and followed this with two meetings where they presented their interim findings. Cllrs Austin and Taylor together with Julian Pritchard attended the meeting held in Dorchester.

Cllr Austin and Julian Pritchard were also invited to meet with Dr Philip Richards of the CCG.

Report By Chairman

After the end of February, the Clinical Commissioning Group [CCG] formally closed the “Public Consultation” period and allowed only one or two late observations. Many will know that on the final date, 28th February, the Save our Beds [SoB] team delivered some 5000 completed consultation questionnaires to the CCG which were accepted and included in the returns for the ORS analysis.

For the WMH Working Group there had been two matters of real importance in the last weeks which had taken matters a lot further in updating what has been going on.

- The draft report from the ORS, which was presented to the CCG in mid June
- To advise the public about the meeting held with Dr Phil Richardson, Director of Design and Transformation of the CCG earlier this month.

The current position was a formal one to allow the CCG to make its decisions based on the responses they received and to remain vigilant, but inactive, until their decisions were announced in September.

Public meeting 15th Feb 2017

The public meeting in February was the first and only meeting to have a representative from Social Services present. In all other respects it was a vital part of the campaign leading up to the closure of the period of public consultation.

Report by Julian Prichard and feedback on the Statistical Analysis

Julian Prichard provided an update on the ‘Save our Beds’ campaign and continuing involvement with the Friends of Westminster Memorial Hospital.

One of the most important comments made by the Head of the ORS presentation team at the public meeting was a direct exhortation to the Chief Officer of the CCG, Tim Goodson that.... “The statistics can be used in any way you want to give you the justification for any decisions you might make.

However, it is essential to take into account the reasons behind the statistics and returns that have been made. The people who responded, particularly those where there has been a distinctly larger response, had reasons that must/should be taken into account when making any final decisions.

Mental Health Services

Melanie Froggat provided an update on the Mental Health Services Review. North Dorset did not have any existing services and there were no attempts to ensure that the needs of the area were acknowledged or included in any future plans. As a result of her campaign, the CCG was aware of these shortfalls and had acknowledged that this oversight needed action. The response from the meeting endorsed this fully and were grateful for all she had done to ensure that North Dorset was included in long-term plans.

Social Services/NHS integration

A number of points were covered. Matters that were discussed informally with Dr Richardson and the interpretation of those discussions.

There is a vital need to ensure the proper management of those of **all ages** who need the combined support of social and health experts and Dr Richardson outlined the way the CCG team will be tackling this. The interim Director of the County Council Adult Services and her support team are now working directly with the CCG to establish a way forward. Finance is a major issue. Both sides are determined to establish an integrated approach and it is likely to take up to 2 years to get this sorted.

Public Transport and the costs of attending Hospitals and surgeries

In the public consultation period, the worries of many people were expressed as to how they get to and how they can afford the costs, of visiting relatives, attending medical appointments and finding routes to get to Hospitals and other NHS sites. The CCG has acknowledged that these difficulties need answers and have already commissioned a report on Dorset transport facilities. This report is due to be published shortly.

Ambulance Services

A report on the provision Ambulance Services has also been commissioned.

GP's and the demands on their services

Demand on GP practices and reducing the burden on the surgeries was discussed including other resources such as Hubs, a greater use of nursing services in the community and bed unblocking.

It was stated that a nationwide analysis suggested that 30% of "GP appointments" dealt with matters that do not require a GP. The CCG is working with GP's to see how this can be reduced. Two factors were being considered:

1. The first is that the GP is answerable for any failure in dealing with a patient. Therefore there is a reluctance to "let go".
2. Patients are equally suspicious of any attempt to separate them from direct access to a GP.

Long Term Future

The CCG are hoping their decision will be made on or shortly after the September 20th.

Further Action

Save our Beds and local residents made a substantial impact on the public consultation. The CCG board is already in full session looking at the options. They have budget issues to achieve across Dorset and need to achieve these in order to meet the budget cuts.

It is felt that our presentations on the suggestions for the Westminster Memorial Hospital have been more fully looked at than we had hoped.

It was proposed to the meeting and agreed, that we let the CCG continue their options without further action from us.

If the decision goes against us, SoB are already well prepared to take the action needed to fight the decisions and for this and have the backing of both our MP's.

If they have accept our reasons for keeping the status quo we will have the opportunity to use all our efforts to support the Hospital and the plans for its future actively.

Dr Andrew Murrison MP

Answered several queries raised by attendees – mainly about the role of GP's, now and in the future. The belief that trainee doctors do not want to work as GP's is not borne out by the facts. The reality remains that there are too few doctors training.

The following comments were added by Cllr Austin:

The "merging of practices" is not an excuse to reduce the number of doctors. It is designed to ensure that, when all vacancies are filled, there is a better service to the whole community. It also means that the "purchasing power" of a larger practice gives them an edge on ensuring their patients have better opportunities for access to the specialist and acute care needs.

Dr Murrison supported the view that the Working Group should stand back while the CCG considered the results of the consultation. He also supported the Save Our Beds view that, in the interim period, work should continue on supporting the Westminster Memorial Hospital. If the decision is to close the beds, we should remain prepared to challenge the CCG.

In the event that the decision is favourable, both the WMH Working Group and SoB will use all their learned experiences and immediately support the Hospital in its role in the community.

Next Meeting

A further meeting would be arranged following the CCG's decision in late September.