

## Motion to Full Council, 13 September 2017

This council notes that the future of St Helier hospital is again subject to debate with the Chief Executive of St Helier & Epsom NHS Trust having launched an “involvement document”, *Providing high quality healthcare services: 2020 to 2030* over the summer months. This sets out possible options for the re-configuration of acute services in the area, including three options to be taken forward for further investigation, two of which would move critical services currently at St Helier hospital to Belmont or Epsom.

Council has a long-standing commitment to ensuring that the residents of Merton have access to a full range of NHS acute services on the St Helier Hospital site, including a blue light A&E and consultant-led maternity service. Any attempt to relocate acute services away from an area of relative deprivation in St Helier in favour of a more affluent area such as Belmont or the Royal Marsden site would be incompatible with the statutory duty on the Merton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to have regard to the need to tackle health inequalities because it would make accessing acute health services significantly more difficult for those in our population who suffer the greatest level of inequality. Instead, council supports the previous strategy to re-build St Helier hospital on its current site with its full range of services intact.

Council notes that:

- much of the engagement period fell over the school summer holidays whilst both parliament and the council were in recess, reducing the potential for democratic involvement;
- the Trust has not published criteria or weightings for their engagement process and the options they are asking the public to comment upon nor has it published the financial cost of this process;
- formal consultations regarding the future of hospital services are required by law to be carried out according to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and that this exercise does not conform to these legislative requirements;
- it is for Merton’s Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) to firstly identify the local health and social care services required in our area through a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and then to agree a joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Merton’s CCG then needs to outline its commissioning priorities giving due regard to both of these documents.

Council notes that the engagement document moots a possible £400m new hospital for Surrey but there is currently no funding in the Treasury “red book” for this and it seems unlikely - in a time of continued austerity when hospitals are being earmarked for downgrade or closure elsewhere in London - that this would be forthcoming from government. Indeed, Chris Grayling, Conservative MP for Epsom & Ewell, recently stated in response to the current engagement exercise: *“Crucially there is no commitment from the NHS to the principle of funding a brand new hospital in SW London, where in recent years the push has been to reduce and not increase the number of hospital sites.”* Nonetheless, if any such capital funding did come forward,

this council would support spending it on rebuilding St Helier hospital on its current site.

Council notes the regrettable decision by the CCG to close the Wilson walk-in centre and the reported recent 20% increase in attendance at the St Helier A&E. We also note the potential consequences for other hospitals, for example, St Georges if the range of services at St Helier hospital were reduced.

Council notes that the Leader has written to the Chair of the Trust and the Chair of the CCG making clear the legal necessity of using the correct statutory processes when taking decisions on hospital services. Council therefore calls on the HWB to commission an independent health needs assessment for the population in Merton in relation to acute hospital services and further calls on the CCG to publish their commissioning intentions with due regard to this and to Merton's Health & Wellbeing Strategy so that any decisions about the future of St Helier hospital can be taken according to the processes set down in law, including that pertaining to reducing health inequalities.

Council notes that the Leader of the Council has asked the Chief Executive of the Trust to explain to the HWB meeting on 19 September how his engagement fits with the statutory consultation and decision making process. Council calls on the Trust to publish the cost of the current engagement process in addition to the criteria and weighting they intend to use in evaluating the results.

Council calls on residents to respond to the current engagement, making clear their support for the full range of services to continue at St Helier hospital, including a blue light A&E and consultant-led maternity, to ask that any decisions on the future of St Helier hospital comply with the statutory requirements based on a full needs assessment, and to support the rebuilding of St Helier on its current site.

Councillor Stephen Alambritis   Councillor Laxmi Attawar   Councillor Dennis Pearce