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26 October 2012

Ms Naomi Stocks
Clerk of the Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Naomi

I refer to the letter from your Committee Chair dated 10 October 2012 ref P-04-424.

The Community Health Council met with the Health Board in June this year to discuss the issues concerning Neath Port Talbot Hospital's doctor shortages. I attach an extract from the minutes of that meeting from which you will note that the CHC agreed that the issue was an urgent service change.

In these circumstances the guidance issued by Welsh Government in March 2011 is that there is no requirement for public consultation.

The CHC did attend most of the weekly planning meetings and press and staff briefings were issued following every meeting so the matter was openly communicated. The CHC was reassured that whilst this one aspect of services at NPT Hospital was being withdrawn on the grounds of safe patient care, there are several other moves of services in to the hospital that will ensure it continues to play a full role in the provision of healthcare to all residents of the ABM Health Board area.

I am sure the Health Board, in their response to you, will give you more information but should you require anything further from me please get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Phillip Williams
Chief Officer

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
ABERTAWA BRO MORGANNWG COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL [ABM CHC]
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN THE BALLROOM, ABERAVON BEACH HOTEL
ON TUESDAY 26 JUNE 2012 AT 9.00 AM

EC59/12 To consider an urgent service matter

Senior representatives, Executives and Clinicians attended for this item. There had been a problem with provision of appropriate medical cover for acute medical provision at NPT Hospital for some time. Despite strenuous efforts to recruit, the lack of cover was becoming a serious safety issues. Wales Deanery, responsible for the education and training of CT1 and CT2 doctors, would no longer be allowing those grades to undertake acute medical placements at NPT Hospital.

It was **AGREED**:-

1. The EC acknowledges the considerable efforts made to date to obtain suitable cover and the difficulties the health board still faces in maintaining medical cover.
2. As the position has now become untenable the health board has no option but to withdraw acute medical services from NPT Hospital from September. The EC agrees that this move falls within the category of 'urgent service change' under the guidance for engagement and consultation issued in March 2011.
3. In accordance with paragraph 48 of that guidance the EC notes that the health board will commence work immediately to prepare contingency plans. A working group will be established to meet weekly with effect from Monday 2 July.
4. The CHC agrees to participate in the planning process and it nominates Mrs Sheila Rano, Chair of NPT Local Committee to sit on this working group.
5. The contingency plans should have a risk assessment undertaken for each of the options considered by the working group (para 48 of the guidance refers).
6. The report to the health board should set out the changes and their impact together with action plans to mitigate any potential adverse impact (para 49 of the guidance). We understand a paper is to be presented to the public part of the Board meeting on Thursday 5 July.