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TENBY TOWN COUNCIL
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30th August 2013

Mr. William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Mr. Powell

Thank you for your recent attendance at a meeting in Tenby to discuss your committee's continued consideration of our recent petition regarding the Hywel Dda Health Board's (LHB) proposals to close the minor injuries unit (MIU) at Tenby Cottage Hospital and transfer its services to local GP practices.

As you will be aware I submitted the petition on behalf of both Tenby Town Council, and the South East Pembrokeshire Health Network. However, since my original submission, Tenby Town Council has broadened the engagement to include all the county councillors and community councils in the south east Pembrokeshire area as we all speak with one voice in opposition to the proposal in the Hywel Dda Local Health Board consultation Your Health Your Future to close Tenby Minor Injuries Unit in favour of a re-provision of service via the local GP practices.

The MIU provides a valuable, and much valued service not only to residents (approximately 20,000 within a five mile radius of Tenby) but also to visitors during the summer months when the population of the area increases to over 50,000. We fear that the services current provided cannot be adequately replicated by the Health Board's plan. When asked by the Town Council during last year's consultation exercise, both Tenby and Saundersfoot GP practices shared these concerns, a position that we believe remains unchanged.

Originally, the Community Health Council (CHC) was minded to include the proposed closure of the MIU in its referral of a number of issues within the Your Health Your Future proposals to be called in for review by Mr. Mark Drakeford, Minister for Health and Social Services.

However, at the 11th hour the CHC decided to withdraw this element from their referral on the proviso that a satisfactory arrangement for the re-provision of withdrawn services be agreed between the Hywel Dda Health Board and the local GP practices.

Through our AMs, and direct correspondence we have requested a meeting with Mr Drakeford, but he has declined feeling that this is 'a matter for local resolution rather than Ministerial determination' as the matter has not been formally referred to him.

He understands that the LHB is discussing the replacement MIU services with the local GPs. However, from our discussions with the GP practices in Tenby and Saundersfoot, we are given to understand that they are no further forward in reaching an agreement than when the Your health Your Future consultation began.

Mrs. Sue Lewis, of the LHB, kindly attended a recent meeting involving local town, county and community councillors and GPs from Tenby Surgery where the MIU, and the possibilities of creating a community health hub at Tenby Cottage Hospital were discussed.

One thing that became apparent at the meeting was that the local GPs did not feel that the Health Board fully understood the vastly different requirements for health provision in a main tourist area like Tenby and south east Pembrokeshire. (I enclose a copy of the minutes of that meeting for your consideration).

We were concerned to learn that at the time of our meeting only two meetings had been held with local GPs and are further concerned to learn that the CHC has had no communication from the local GP practices, even though the LHB state they are in discussion. One of our County Councillors has lodged a Freedom of Information request regarding the level of consultation between the LHB and the GPs and is awaiting a response.

Both we, and Mr. Drakeford, are aware that there is also an issue over provision of service at the MIU over weekends and Bank Holidays when the GPs do not normally work. In an effort to resolve this the LHB have piloted a scheme between 18th July and 7th September whereby this service has been provided by a third party (in this instance the Red Cross).

We are again extremely concerned as to how the LHB organised this pilot scheme. We believe the CHC were only aware that the pilot was going to be undertaken on the last day of submission of tenders for the scheme and were informed via a third party that the contract had been agreed and the scheme would actually commence.

The CHC were successful in reaching an agreement with the LHB that the MIU's Emergency Nurse Practitioners (ENPs) remain in situ to oversee the pilot (to ensure that the Red Cross were able to deal with all the types of injuries that presented at the MIU). However, this agreement was subject to a 'mid-term review' and, after four weeks, the ENPs were withdrawn by the LHB and relocated to the A&E department of Witybush Hospital. We understand that this decision was taken not only because the LHB

considered that the Red Cross cover was adequate but due to manpower shortages at Withybush.

Although the pilot scheme still has one week to run, we would be interested to see a complete evaluation by the LHB including the effect on patients and a full financial comparison between the two modes of service.

It was also revealed at our meeting involving the local Tenby practice that the GPs, as part of their consultations with the Health Board over future provision of services, had asked the Board if they could research models of provision in other mainly tourist areas in the United Kingdom with particular reference to Minor Injuries. Newquay in Cornwall was cited as an example.

Tenby Town Council wrote to Mr. Purt, Chief Executive of the Hywel Dda Health Board on 12th June 2013 asking if this modelling exercise is being undertaken and, if so, if the results could be made available to us once completed. To date we have received no information and we would be interested to learn if the LHB has indeed commenced this research and prepared evidence of models and costings as promised.

The LHB has repeatedly given assurances that the MIU in Tenby will not close until the current levels of service are replicated by an alternative provider, and that the level of weekend and Bank Holiday provision (via ENPs) will resume at the conclusion of the pilot scheme. We are content to accept these reassurances at the moment but would stress that the preferred option throughout our area is that the MIU remains open throughout the year and staffing provision be maintained at its present level through the ENPs.

Yours sincerely



Mr. Andrew Davies
FINANCIAL OFFICER/CLERK TO THE COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE MEETING BETWEEN COUNTY, TOWN, NEIGHBOURING COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS WITH MRS S LEWIS HYWEL DDA COUNTY DIRECTOR FOR PEMBROKESHIRE - PROVISION FOR TENBY COTTAGE HOSPITAL SITE, GAS LANE HELD 31ST MAY 2013

PRESENT

Councillor M Evans	Pembrokeshire County Councillor (Tenby South)
Councillor P Baker	Pembrokeshire County Councillor (Saundersfoot)
Councillor J Preston	Pembrokeshire County Councillor (St Mary's Out Liberty)
Councillor T Brinsdon	Pembrokeshire County Councillor (Amroth)
Councillor J Williams	Pembrokeshire County Councillor (East Williamston)
Councillor B Cleevely	Saundersfoot Community Council
Councillor C Thomas	Tenby Town Council
Councillor L Blackhall	Tenby Town Council
Mrs S Lewis	Hywel Dda County Director for Pembrokeshire
Dr I Griffiths	Tenby GP
Dr D Kelly	Tenby GP
Mr M Thomas	SEPCHN
Mr A. Davies	Clerk to Tenby Town Council/Financial Officer
Mrs L Hensman	Assistant Clerk

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from County Councillor M Williams, Tenby North Ward, Councillor T Hallett, Councillor Mrs S Lane, Councillor Mrs T Rossiter and Councillor Mrs C Brown.

County Councillor M Evans took the Chair explaining there was no formal agenda; however he took the opportunity to thank everyone for giving their time to discuss the provision for Tenby Cottage Hospital, Gas Lane, Tenby and update any progress in relation to the proposed closure of Tenby MIU.

Following discussion on the present situation relating to Tenby MIU, Mrs Lewis reiterated on behalf of the Hywel Dda Health Board that they stand by the statement 'no changes will be made to Minor Injury cover in Tenby until suitable alternative provision of services have been put in place', adding unfortunately nothing further can be discussed or progressed forward on this matter until the Welsh Assembly Health Minister Mark Drakeford returns his report, following it being referred to him by the Community Health Council. Hywel Dda Health Board has been pressing the Welsh Assembly for a response so they can progress and develop the future provision of services as documented in the proposals, however they are still waiting.

Councillors all expressed how strongly they felt that Hywel Dda Health Board still failed to fully appreciate the pressures placed on local health provision not only by the large influx of holiday makers during the summer months but also by the limited transportation network, the large percentage of people who do not have access to their own vehicle and the large elderly population within south east Pembrokeshire.

Mrs Lewis explained that the Health Board had held several meetings with the Local Doctors Surgeries and now they are looking into creating a 'models of provision' for Tenby by reviewing models of similar tourist destinations where the population increased dramatically,

giving examples like Newquay in Cornwall. The doctors responded saying they were prepared to recommence negotiations on alternative provision of care once the Minister's decision was known and when documentation of alternative models with costings are provided.

Discussion took place in relation to options available to utilise the present Tenby Cottage Hospital in Gas Lane as the community health hub for south east Pembrokeshire. It was outlined that many of the facilities highlighted including Consultant led Surgical, Medical, Orthopaedic and Gynaecology Clinics, Dentistry, Ophthalmology, Podiatry, Family Planning and In patient beds used to be present at the old cottage hospital site and gradually they were withdrawn due mainly to staff shortages at the main hospital, resulting in minimal services remaining like at present. Therefore it was felt developing the services that are missing in the community will be providing the same services under a different title and these services were well used and reduced anxiety and stress for the local residents needs in relation to transportation issues. Mrs Lewis stressed that the Health Board were fully committed to looking at the services that could be provided at the new site and said it would be illogical for them not to look at utilising such a fairly new, purpose built building and she denied that the Health Board were considering disposing of the building.

In conclusion Mrs Lewis reaffirmed that, following the Health Minister's decision, she would be happy to meet with Councillors round the table again to look at services that are currently operated from the building and what additional services could be introduced.

All present at the meeting welcomed the commitment made by the Health Board but felt it was still important to ensure that Tenby MIU services were retained in the area at present levels.

Plan of Action

1).To write and invite Mr Drakeford, Welsh Minister for Health , to visit Tenby enabling him to gain a better understanding of the needs of the area prior to making his final decision on the Hywel Dda Health Boards proposal.