

HAVERHILL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday 10th January 2012 at 7.00 pm
In The Main Hall, Haverhill Arts Centre, High Street, Haverhill



HAVERHILL
TOWN COUNCIL

Present: **Chair: Town Councillor: M Byrne**
 Town Councillors: L Ager, D André, R André, T Cook
 (following co-option at item 2), P French
 E Goody, P Hanlon, B Hawes, D Russo
 G Stroud, J Stroud, and C Turner
By invitation: **Martin Royal, NHS Suffolk (until item 7)**
Also present: **Thirty five members of the public**

MINUTES

1. **Apologies for Absence**
Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs. Carr, Green and Samuels.
2. **Co-Option of Councillor for North Ward**
Mr Timothy S P Cook was unanimously co-opted as a Councillor for the North Ward, signed a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, and took his place on the full Council for the remainder of the meeting.
3. **Declaration of Interests**
No Members declared any interests on items on the agenda.
4. **To confirm Minutes of Meeting held 29th November 2011**
Subject to inclusion of Cllr Ager as an attendee, the minutes of the meeting held 29th November 2011 were agreed as a true record.
5. **To deal with any urgent matters arising from the Minutes not covered by this agenda**
There were no urgent matters arising from the minutes.
6. **A presentation by NHS Suffolk on the proposed closure of The Crown Health Centre**
A presentation was received from Martin Royal, Director of Corporate Services, NHS Suffolk, on the Review of The Crown Health Centre, Haverhill.

The Mayor, with the agreement of the Council, adjourned the meeting at 7.18pm for the public forum.

Sixteen members of the public made comments and posed questions on the proposed closure of the Crown Health Centre, in respect of:

- The likely consequent increase in waiting times at the remaining surgeries in Haverhill
- The apparent inconsistency between the decision to close the Centre, and the fact that it had won an award

ACTION

TOWN CLERK

- The failure to deliver a promised digital x-ray facility
- Concerns relating to the lack of consultation on future provision
- Whether and how any savings from the closure would be reinvested in health services in Haverhill specifically
- The reliability and interpretation of data used to support the closure proposal
- Mismanagement by NHS Suffolk in the provision of walk-in and GP services locally
- The extent to which demographic projections have been considered in arriving at the closure proposal
- Uncertainty over the future arrangements for registered and walk-in patients of the Crown Health Centre
- Concerns about the likely inconvenience for patients if they have to travel to Bury St Edmunds or Addenbrookes for treatment they currently receive at the Crown Health Centre
- Difficulties with obtaining appointments at local GP practices compared with the convenience of the Crown
- The extent to which the costs of replacement provision by local GP practices will offset the savings from closure
- That Accident and Emergency attendances may have risen for appropriate reasons, and should not necessarily be used as an indication that the Crown Health Centre has failed in its objective of reducing such attendances
- That walk-in arrangements help to build up relationships locally with patients who might otherwise attend A&E away from Haverhill
- That the popularity of the walk-in facility as a service additional to GP registration, reflects a strong preference for this arrangement locally
- That the Crown does not provide value for money, just made money for the private sector, and that the cost would have been better spent on provision via GP services
- Lack of consultation with GPs by the Town Council
- Proposed reductions in the Out of Hours service In Haverhill, further reducing patient support locally and increasing A&E attendances
- The capacity of the remaining GP practices to absorb demand resulting from the closure of the Crown Health Centre
- The arrangements for other community healthcare professionals who currently use the Crown as a base
- An appeal to NHS Suffolk to consider the people of Haverhill as well as their organisational interests and targets
- Ambulance referrals to the Crown Health Centre by other surgeries, pharmacies and the Out of Hours Service
- An invitation to the Town Council to attend a future meeting of the Patient Participation Group
- The excellent and immediate service offered by the Crown Health Centre, that may not be available from other GP practices
- The future of staff employed by the Crown Health Centre should the closure go ahead

Martin Royal responded to specific points as requested:

- The closure was proposed in part because the Centre had not achieved anything like the number of patient registrations that had been expected
- NHS Suffolk is still examining the detail behind the 22,000 visits to the Centre. This is a figure for visits and not patients

- The demand created by the closure can be handled by other practices in the town
- Consultation is ongoing – NHS Suffolk has met with the ONE Haverhill Board, and now with the Town Council
- This is not a money-saving exercise. The savings will be reinvested in healthcare for the benefit of patients
- The funding for the Centre is from an ongoing national allocation
- The data used to support the proposal has not been manipulated
- The operation of the Crown Health Centre has not reduced A&E referrals as was hoped
- Comments about waits for appointment times at the meeting are well-made and the issue is under review
- The Out of Hours Service will remain available as needed, no final decision has been made on changes, and changes will not be a service reduction
- Issues relating to extended hours should be discussed with GPs
- It is wrong to suggest that money has been taken from healthcare in Haverhill
- NHS Suffolk pays for data and gets the best information available
- Mr Royal was not aware of any problems with availability of bases from which community health services can be delivered
- In the absence of the Crown Health Centre, the public will have to use other GP services in the town
- The future of any 'at risk' staff is an issue between the PCT and The Practice plc
- Mr Royal refuted any accusation of lying about changes to the Out of Hours Service. This was an area of ongoing discussion with Harmoni

Mr Royal also undertook to:

- Provide figures in respect of referrals from the Crown Health Centre to A&E, and figures for the number of weekend and out of hours consultations at the Crown Health Centre
- Feed back comments from the meeting regarding changes to the Out of Hours Service to NHS Suffolk
- Seek clarification on changes to the Out of Hours Service, and confirm the position to the Town Council

For the Town Council, the Mayor responded to a specific points as follows:

- The Town Council has listened to the views of residents, most of whom are very supportive of the Crown Health Centre. There could perhaps have been direct contact with GPs previously, but by the same token GPs could have approached the Town Council
- The invitation to the Town Council by the Patient Participation Group should be sent to the Town Clerk

There being no further questions the meeting was resumed at 8.13pm.

7. To decide the Town Council's response to the proposed closure

The Town Council considered a course of action regarding the proposed closure of The Crown Health Centre, and resolved unanimously to urge NHS Suffolk to continue the service at the Crown Health Centre, by extending the lease and planning consent if necessary, and continue to seek a suitable permanent solution.

The Town Clerk was instructed to write to NHS Suffolk to relay both this resolution, and the issues raised during the public forum.

TOWN CLERK

8. **To consider making an expression of interest in providing, or assisting to provide services at Place Court residential care home**

The Town Clerk was instructed to write to Mrs Deborah Cadman, Chief Executive of Suffolk County Council, requesting a meeting to discuss this matter.

TOWN CLERK

9. **Closure**

The meeting was closed at 8.52pm.