

Submission to the Consultation on “Improving healthcare together” Wandsworth Council Labour Councillors

We welcome the former chancellor, Sajid Javid’s announcement on 30th September 2019 that £500m has been allocated to reorganise services across Surrey Downs, Sutton and Merton Clinical Commissioning Groups. The proposed changes in the “Improving Healthcare together” consultation affect Epsom, St. Helier and Sutton Hospitals.

This is a project that has been going on for several years, and around ¾ million people who live in Sutton, Merton & Surrey – and some Wandsworth residents who use services – such as hip replacements – at those hospitals. There is an urgent need to improve the buildings – particularly Epsom – and to address staff shortages in A&E which mean that it is almost impossible for all three hospitals to run a full 24/7 A&E service.

Clinical leaders’ preferred option to rationalise A&E services at a new Sutton Hospital and change Epsom & St. Helier to Urgent care centres which offer a reduced range of services. Their analysis is that this is the best option to provide better health care in the area, will strengthen specialist cancer care already sited in Sutton and enhance services offered to the area.

As with all major reorganisations of health services, the changes can profoundly affect local people and many residents are concerned about how they will access emergency care in the future. Furthermore, such significant changes affect demand in other hospitals, including our local hospital at St. George’s, and extra pressure on St. George’s could cause a degradation in services to our Wandsworth residents.

Our particular concerns are:

- That the trusts provide proper education for local people on when to use Urgent Care centres and when to go to A&E;
- There is sufficient support for St. George’s – including extra funding, staff and beds - to mitigate extra pressures on A&E when the new hospital is built;
- There are improved transport links for the Merton, Sutton & Epsom area to allow people to use public transport to get to hospital – particularly for outpatients appointments and visiting;
- The new services, hospitals and transport are designed to minimise greenhouse emissions.

We would also like the project team to work within the the London Mayor’s “Six tests” framework to “Champion and challenge the NHS, to advocate for Londoners and to actively engage with consultations.”

The new scheme should also pass the Mayor’s six tests, which are:

- Not to widen health inequalities and to reduce these where possible;
- To avoid reduction in hospital beds across the sector (and the current corona-virus pandemic highlights this need);
- To ensure there is sufficient funding for all aspects of the scheme, including non-NHS aspects such as improved transport;
- Any changes need to consider the full impact on local authority social care;
- Changes should have widespread clinical support (and we would particularly recommend that St. George’s clinical teams should be fully involved, because of the possible effects on their A&E);
- There should be full patient & public engagement. On this point, part of the consultation will overlap with the pandemic and I suggest the deadline is extended for two weeks; and the project team actively seek submissions from local GPs and hospitals as these groups may have been too busy to meet the deadline.

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Labour Group Speaker for Adults & Health
Wandsworth Council

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