

Matthew Tait
Chief Officer
Surrey Heartlands Health and Care
Partnership

Letter sent by email to:
hello@improvinghealthcaretogether.org.uk

Date: 5th May 2020

Dear Matthew,

Re: Improving Healthcare Together - the impact of COVID-19

We are writing this letter jointly as our two boroughs have a shared interest in the community which is closest to and which relies upon the current St Helier hospital.

Our submissions to the consultation process both referenced the importance of the hospital to this community which comprises one of the most concentrated areas of deprivation in our part of London. They stressed the economic contribution to the area of the current hospital and the way in which it is served by transport links, and the way in which these things are complemented by the attachment of that local community.

In recent weeks, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt in our communities and our hospitals. We believe that this cannot but give rise to the need to re-consider and review the evidence that has been submitted as part of the initial consultation, which closed too early in this pandemic for the impact to be capable of being evaluated and understood.

As boroughs with responsibility for the public health of our communities, we will need to review our Joint Strategic Needs Analyses to ensure that what we have learned about the vulnerabilities of our diverse population is reflected in our future planning. It seems only right that this should be taken into consideration in planning new hospital provision.

We recognise too that the hospitals which comprise the Epsom and St Helier Hospital Trust have been used differently during the crisis and believe that this fact together with the experience of service users and staff should be taken into account in the decision about the siting of future provision.

We remain convinced that the best possible outcome would be the provision of the new acute hospital on the St Helier site.

We further believe that whatever solution is chosen, recent circumstances not only emphasise the importance of the economic, transportation and accessibility arguments

which caused us to favour St Helier, they also reinforce the need for this hospital to provide some vital services to its local community.

We take pride in the way in which NHS and council staff have worked together during the current crisis. We believe that that needs to be reflected in even stronger joint working at the heart of our most diverse and deprived communities when we recover. Specifically, we would like to see the current St Helier hospital remain at the heart of our community. The community will expect, that, if it is not the site of the acute unit, it should be the site for some services that are very much needed by the local population including;

- more community beds, including "discharge to assess" beds located in this accessible and visible location
- a Children's hub, meeting the needs of young people, dealing with child development and recognising that this is an area which would benefit from greater focus in Mental Health (CAMHS) and Safeguarding resources
- Mental Health and Wellbeing services such as have already been planned for the Wilson hospital site in Mitcham. The space on this site would present a real opportunity to provide services to ensure the wellbeing of our community and to address some of the deficits in mental health and counselling services from which the local community is suffering.
- Primary care is under pressure throughout out boroughs, and we recognise that attempts that have been made to date to integrate primary and acute care on the St Helier site, but we think that this needs to go further and that any new configuration needs to work to support primary care and community services so that hospital remains for our communities a resource to be accessed in times of need rather than the only visible source of help and advice.

We recognise that the consultation has formally closed but believe that recent events should be a cause for wider consideration and reflection and we believe that these points represent the legitimate aspiration of our community in response to those changing circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Ruth Dombey
Leader of Sutton Council



Councillor Tobin Byers
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and the Environment

