

Immediate Release

26th June 2007

**SUSSEX MPs ISSUE DECLARATION AT EMERGENCY
MEETING ON HOSPITAL RECONFIGURATION**

Six West Sussex Conservative MPs were joined by Wealden MP Charles Hendry for an emergency meeting at the House of Commons on Monday afternoon in response to news that the West Sussex PCT had approved the consultation document at their board meeting in Worthing earlier in the day.

The six were:

Tim Loughton, Peter Bottomley, Nick Gibb, Nick Herbert, Nicholas Soames and Andrew Tyrie. Horsham MP Francis Maude was unable to be present but has added his support.

The move followed the news that the PCT consultation had formally started despite a letter calling for the process to be suspended signed by the seven MPs, the Chairman Leader and Opposition Leader of West Sussex County Council and every district and borough Council Leader, Chairman/Mayor across West Sussex and a majority of Opposition Leaders too. The MPs discussed strategy for opposing the limited options contained in the consultation document over the next 18 weeks and agreed the following statements:

- The consultation options have not been given the backing of medical staff and the clinical case for reconfiguration has not been made. It is not clear to what consultants have actually signed up to as the PCT claim. We require more information about the likely patient numbers on which future specific services are based and costings.
- The consultation document completely fails to take account of all the representations which have been made calling for a fourth option which retains at least two major hospitals in West Sussex including maternity and A&E facilities. The consultation should be suspended until that option has been offered to the public and to clinicians.
- It is not in the interests of any of our constituents across the whole county if Worthing, St Richards or the Princess Royal are downgraded. We believe the healthcare of

patients will suffer. The County's MPs will be fighting a united campaign.

- The financial case for downgrading hospitals now appears extremely weak on the basis of the PCT's own forecasts.
- Rather than only consider downgrading the PCT should put a case for what would make at least 2 major hospitals clinically and financially viable.
- We strongly contest that the Sussex County Hospital in Brighton is the best place for investing West Sussex healthcare capital money. We challenge the basis on which the Sussex County Hospital in Brighton has been assumed as the most appropriate place for developing a critical care and trauma centre in preference to Worthing/Southlands or St Richard's for example, at an estimated cost of £151m - £215m. That money would contribute a lot to healthcare within West Sussex, not outside the county. We also have strong concerns about the financial sustainability of Brighton hospitals without the economies of scale from attracting West Sussex patients. Good, efficient and cost effective and well liked hospitals in West Sussex should not be sacrificed to maintain existing structures out of county.
- We seriously question the appropriateness and soundness of some of the clinical assumptions that have been made in drawing up the document. We question why a maternity unit delivering around 3000 babies a year is clinically or financially unsustainable in Sussex against a unit delivering 400 babies or more. On what evidence of e.g. perinatal mortality is this based for example?
- Little heed is apparently being paid to the huge increase in house building in the area with the attendant pressures on infrastructure and health demand.

The MPs will be holding meetings with consultants and other medical staff from Worthing/Southlands, St Richard's and the Princess Royal over the next few days and weeks, as well as with their respective hospital campaign committees. They will also be setting up a County wide campaign website to coordinate the hospital campaigns with a number of common events planned.

Mid Sussex MP Nicholas Soames said; "None of the options are acceptable to me or my constituents in East Grinstead and elsewhere in Mid Sussex and I want to assure all of them that I

and my colleagues will be fighting the PCT's proposals with every resource at our disposal. It would be an act of folly to downgrade the Princess Royal Hospital when Mid Sussex's projected growth will see 15,000 additional homes in the county and an additional 38,000 residents by 2026. We will not allow the Government to downgrade the social infrastructure already under great pressure. The Support the Princess Royal Hospital campaign together with the other hospital campaigns is conducting a long and hard analysis of the options and we will be presenting a submission to the consultation based on the clinical case for retaining the PRH with a full A&E and maternity service. I urge the residents of East Grinstead to respond formally to the consultation."

Wealden MP Charles Hendry comments: "Many thousands of my constituents rely on the Princess Royal Hospital. Closing the A&E and maternity facilities would be a disaster, with patients required to travel to Brighton rather than Haywards Heath. The extra time involved could literally be life-threatening. I will work with Nicholas and with the medical specialists and patients to make the strongest possible case for keeping the Princess Royal open."

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