

MP SUPPORTS GPs IN SHOWDOWN WITH BUCKS PCT

19 July 2009

Thame MP, John Howell, has backed local GPs in their attempt to get answers both as to why the contract for medical services at Thame Community Hospital is being awarded to a national healthcare plc rather than to local doctors and also how the GPs can continue to provide medical cover for the hospital.

He said:

"My concern and that of the GPs is ensuring that Thame Hospital gets the most appropriate service for patients and for Thame residents. The GPs have raised some fundamental questions about how the new contract which Bucks PCT is planning to issue will do that on only the four hours of medical cover per week proposed.

"Four hours a week reduces the level of medical cover to the extent where I wonder if you can even go on calling Thame Community Hospital a hospital at all. It also undervalues the enormous benefit which local GP involvement can bring in keeping care close to the patient."

Local Thame GPs are meeting representatives of Bucks PCT on Thursday 23 July to discuss their concerns about being excluded from the future running of Thame Hospital and to seek ways to continue to provide medical cover to Thame Community Hospital

John Howell added:

"I can understand the pressure Bucks PCT is under to cut costs at the moment. But that should not be at the expense of a safe and credible service to the town and the surrounding villages. Residents are entitled to put the PCT on the spot on this issue to get the answers they need. If these answers are not forthcoming I shall ask for the decision to be called in by the Bucks Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee."

In a separate move, fears had been raised in the town that a £4 million investment in the hospital by the Department for Health (finally confirmed in October 2008 after a parliamentary question from Thame's MP) was under threat. This followed the failure of the NHS locally to answer questions about the future of the funding.

As a result of a further written parliamentary question from the MP on 16 July 2009, Ministers have confirmed that whilst none of the funding has yet been spent, the project is expected to have been completed by 2011-12.

Ministers also provided a timetable for the work and the likely draw down of the funding:

New unit: work to start in August 2010 and be completed by September 2011
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Refurbishment of older buildings: 2011-12.

£2.28 million is expected to be spent in 2010-11 and £1.72 million in 2011-12.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Picture attached: John Howell MP discusses the PCT's decision with Dr Richard Harrington of the Rycote Practice, Thame