

Leighton-Linslade Town Council Health Task & Finish Group

17 May 2022

Information paper 3 from Cllr Steve Owen

Note of meeting at Bassett Road Surgery 8 April 2022

Note for the record (intended in the first instance for the Bassett Road Surgery Patient Participation Group)

Leighton Buzzard Health Hub

Meeting at Bassett Road Surgery 8 April 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

Rose Gunter and Steve Owen of BRS PPG met Dr John Henderson and another representative of Bassett Road surgery on Friday, 8 April. Two Leighton Road surgery colleagues also attended and contributed helpfully to the discussion.

2. HISTORY OF LEIGHTON BUZZARD HEALTH HUB

Steve Owen summarised the current position re the future Leighton Buzzard Health Hub. BLMK CCG/CBC currently placed our Hub fifth and last of the priority order for the planned Health Hubs across Central Bedfordshire, and these two bodies had committed funding to implement the Dunstable and Biggleswade Hubs but not the other three. It was also noted that the Health Hub agenda (i.e. integration of local Health and Social Care services, and shifting services from hospitals to localities), ran hand in hand with a) the provision of GP services and also b) the agenda of the Primary Care Network services such as social prescribing.

3. PRIORITISATION

BLMK CCG/CBC's reason for prioritising the Leighton Buzzard Hub fifth and last had been stated as the relative abundance of space at the three Leighton Buzzard GP surgeries compared to elsewhere in the CBC area. This is borne out by a CBC briefing note dated 11 October 2021 for Leighton-Linslade CBC councillors stating that CBC were accepting BLMK CCG's prioritisation.

However

- a) Dr Henderson repeated the point he had made at a Town Council meeting on 18 October 2021, that all three GP surgeries were in fact short of space.
- b) This was confirmed for Leighton Road Surgery by the two LRS representatives.
- c) A letter from BLMK CCG to CBC dated 24 March 2022 [*see information paper 2*] confirmed that the three surgeries were full to the point of affecting their ability to take on new patients or accommodate additional GPs or allied clinical staff.
- d) **This contradicts what other managers in BLMK CCG have said and used as their rationale for placing Leighton bottom of the priority list.**
- e) The use of "spare GP surgery space" as the sole determinant of priority ignores the travel distance to hospital argument for Leighton-Linslade residents and the NHS savings achievable by localising certain hospital services for a catchment of 60,000 residents.
- f) The Leighton patient community was spending large sums of money travelling to surrounding hospitals [Note: later established at over £1 million pa.]

4. GP SUPPORT

Dr Henderson confirmed that he and his BRS colleagues remained fully supportive of the Leighton Buzzard Hub and his understanding was that colleague GPs in the other two surgeries were of the same view.

5. FINANCING

Steve Owen updated on the Parliamentary debate on the funding of Health Infrastructure instigated by Andrew Selous MP on 29 March 2022. A Ministerial announcement on Health Infrastructure had been promised for within 2 weeks of that debate. [*Note on 29.4.2022 – still awaited*].

SO commented that neither the CCG nor CBC had confirmed whether the permissioning by CBC of major new estates on the eastern side of Leighton Buzzard over the past 10 years had been used to lever S106 agreements with the developers for Health infrastructure projects such as the Leighton Buzzard Hub – a major opportunity missed.

However it was noted that the Dunstable and Biggleswade Hubs were being funded partly through national Infrastructure funds and partly through capital funding allocated by BLMK CCG and provided to them by central government. There seemed to be no reason why those funding sources should not also be available to a Leighton Buzzard Hub once the need for the Leighton Hub to be accorded next top priority had been acknowledged by BLMK CCG.

6. NEW GPs SURGERIES IN LEIGHTON BUZZARD AND LINSLADE

Dr Henderson confirmed that the provision of a new GP surgery in Eastern Leighton Buzzard would not damage the business/financial interests of Bassett Road surgery and that BRS would welcome a new Eastern surgery. [*It will be helpful to have the same confirmation from the other two surgeries*].

During Andrew Selous' 29.3.22 debate the Health Minister confirmed the principle that new GP surgeries should be located in the midst of new development. This means the provision of a new GP surgery amid the Eastern Leighton Buzzard estates (and, picking up on a key point made by Andrew Selous in the debate that Government funding should have retrospection), that the Bideford Green and Knaves Hill estates justified a GP surgery located in Linslade too.

The BLMK CCG 24.3.2022 letter [*see information paper 2*] centred on a request for a S106 contribution for a new Leighton Buzzard Health Hub, arising from a current multi-home planning application for new Leighton Buzzard homes. Confusingly, the letter contained a national formula for translating new home numbers into GP surgery space and costs, but the stated destination of the money requested was for a Health Hub rather than a new Eastern GP surgery. Of course, both are needed. The CCG have subsequently confirmed they have been making similar requests to CBC for the past 4 years. [*Steve Owen has written to CBC asking them to confirm the details, dates and amounts of money requested.*]

7. HUB SERVICES

BLMK CCG/CBC are refusing to share or engage with the Town Council over the Strategic Outline Case for a Leighton Buzzard Hub which they have drafted. Dr Henderson confirmed that he and his colleagues have not been approached by BLMK CCG for private discussions on a possible slate of services in the Hub.

It was noted that BLMK CCG/CBC are justifying their insistence that "consultation" has taken place, on their very limited interaction with a small number of local GPs and residents in 2018. It

was also noted that BLMK CCG/CBC were continuing to base their planning on three possible locations for a Leighton Buzzard Hub that were inadequate, unsuitable and did not meet Government policy of being located centrally in towns (in order to facilitate public access).

8. TOWN COUNCIL POSITION

Steve Owen summarised. BLMK CCG and CBC officers and lead members had declined to attend a recent meeting of the TC's Health group. There was an absence of challenge at the CBC Health & Wellbeing Board, who were apparently accepting the inevitability of proceeding at whatever pace and in whatever direction BLMK CCG decreed.

At its meeting on 4 April 2022 the Town Council by majority vote had rejected a call to inject greater urgency into the search for a Leighton Health Hub. However a minority of town councillors intended to press on, with clear public support.

9. CONCLUSIONS

1. The confirmation of "no space" at the 3 current Leighton surgeries removes the CCG's justification of lowest priority for the Leighton Hub. Cost to the community and cost to the NHS added up to a compelling case for prioritisation.
2. Funding sources for the Hub exist but have not been sought by either the CCG or CBC, identified and applied.
3. New GP surgeries in Eastern Leighton and Linslade accord with current Government policy but BLMK CCG are ignoring that policy.
4. Current GPs support the provision of the new Hub and new GP surgeries.
5. BLMK CCG are disregarding their own consultation policy.

10. SUGGESTED ACTION FOR THE PPG

Suggested:

- a) BLMK CCG/CBC should be asked to make the Leighton Buzzard Hub their highest next priority in the light of the new information.
- b) The Town Council should be given the new evidence and asked to re-invigorate its current passive approach.
- c) BLMK CCG/CBC should be urged to search the funding sources used for the Dunstable and Biggleswade Hubs, and Andrew Selous should be asked to actively support this press.
- d) Pressure on BLMK CCG/CBC for a new GP surgery in Eastern Leighton Buzzard, and in Linslade, should be renewed, and again the support of Andrew Selous sought.
- e) Andrew Selous should be asked to table a Parliamentary Question regarding the CCG's refusal to follow their own consultation policy in refusing the Town Council, local GPs and clinicians, and the town's residents, a dialogue on both the preferred location of the Hub and on the range of services it will contain (the Strategic Outline case).
- f) BRS PPG are suggested to discuss and form a view on the points above and write formally to the Town Council, all local CBC councillors, and Andrew Selous MP, pressing their views, and consider asking Public Questions at the next CBC Health and Wellbeing Board meeting and at the next public meeting of the BLMK CCG.