

Appendix 1

Precis of the Oxfordshire Sustainability & Transformation Plan and its Presentation

This current plan has and will have a major impact upon services provided by Banbury's Horton Hospital. Rationalisation has already taken place prior to the current 'Consultation' process which in itself has been split into two parts, with Part 1 concluding public input on April 9th and Part 2 scheduled for the end of 2017.

The pressure group 'Keep The Horton General' has been in existence a number of years already and has previously successfully prevented the transition of general hospital care to Oxford. This group is led by Keith Strangwood, previously a Cherwell District Councillor. They actively campaign to prevent the further downgrading of services at the Horton.

On the 23rd February a public meeting was held at The Pavilion in Hornton, hosted by the pressure group. Some stark facts were discussed and the gradual rundown of services at the hospital were explained to the village. After this meeting I decided to join a demonstration in London on the 4th March both to show support and learn more.

This demonstration was a national event and was both a general protest at NHS underfunding and several specific protests against downgrading of facilities from other areas across the country, often with similar scenarios to those currently being enacted at the Horton. Clearly the Horton is not the only hospital facing such a programmed and systematic erosion of facilities.

Following this I looked at the online presentation of the local Care Commissioning Group (CCG), the body tasked with carrying out the above 'Sustainability & Transformation Plan (STP)'. The CCG appeared to be a mixture of administrators (at least two of whom had previous health Service experience) and present and previous General Practitioners (GPs).

The facts presented in the STP, being at variance to those described by the Keep The Horton General (KTHG) group, left me none the wiser over what exactly was being proposed so I attended a public meeting held by the CCG at Banbury's St Mary's church on the evening of 16th March. This was billed as a 'consultation' with ideas requested from the audience and questions answered.

The event was well attended and the venue large but well provisioned with facilities for debate. There was a moderator to comper the evening and after a brief introduction a video presentation was shown of the STP 'vision' and how it was to be both necessary and successful. Questions were promised for the ninety minutes or so following the presentation. The panel, arraigned facing the audience were introduced and the video shown.

The presentation itself was a mix of narrative and comments from various fairly senior medical staff. It appeared somewhat bland and far from being a consultation appeared more a presentation of what *was* going to happen to the Horton. The message appeared to be, 'this is what must happen, this is what is going to happen'. Some of the plans described appeared dysfunctional, others based upon untried and unresourced services that were not only currently not in place, but weren't even properly planned. Apparently bed-blocking after emergency care or surgery is a major problem. The solution? Get rid of the beds – and let GP's care for the vulnerable in their own homes! One of the panel, a GP himself, enthusiastically declared this to be 'no problem' for him. Yet his own speciality are already declaring that GP services are perhaps 'two years from complete meltdown'.

Another part of the presentation enthusiastically promoted Oxford's JR's Stroke Trauma Care as the future for Banbury, seemingly oblivious to the time it would take to get a stroke victim to the JR, when we are told every minute counts in the prevention of long-term stroke damage. Another was regarding the currently downgraded maternity facilities. Expectant mothers who wanted consultant doctors were told they could always go to the JR – or even Warwick or Northampton, both of which were in another Health Authority!

The question-and-answer session, potentially of an hour and twenty minutes got off to a bad start. The moderator introduced the local MP, Victoria Prentis, who made a rambling statement, then asked the panel to give their opinions of the video presentation. This drawn-out response occupied nearly fifteen minutes before she then asked a couple of questions. This brought the available time for the public to ask questions down to just over an hour. Mindful of a growing impatience the moderator asked the Witney MP to limit his own statement and questions.

In the hour left for public discussion the first half was limited to 'maternity-only' questions. Some valid points about emergency practices in maternity were raised and poorly answered. Councillors were told not to ask questions after two had participated, 'so that ordinary people could have a say'. The moderator appeared to choose those that appeared less focussed or determined, though that didn't necessarily give an easy ride to the panel in the event. Keith Strangwood wasn't called and was forced to interrupt to make the point the reason there were inadequate maternity patients to justify full services, was that the hospital was deliberately turning away patients!

The final half-hour was a farce, I'd had my hand up for an hour but for whatever reason the moderator refused to call me. He also visibly sifted the written questions as well. Those that had pertinent questions were told to cut it short. The wafflers were allowed to waffle on. When asked why potential patients weren't taken from the north of Oxford (to save overloading the JR) and to boost the need for the Horton, the answer was, "You can't expect people to travel from Oxford!", to which the response from the room was "But you expect us to travel to Oxford!"

In retrospect, I expected the CCG team to be a sharp team of hard-nosed administrators. In my view they were foggy-minded, imprecise and over-reliant on wishful thinking. It didn't help that they were attempting to find a different reason for their plans other than stripping resources from the north of the county to sustain services in the south. For at the close of the meeting the chairman let the cat out of the bag with the statement, " If anyone here imagines for a moment that every large town will have its own hospital in the future, then they're going to be sadly disappointed...there isn't the money." Said it all, really.

The following STP 'consultation' was in Abingdon. I wonder what the people there think of switching resources from Banbury to Oxford?

This then is my interpretation of the STP and the attitude behind it. I wasn't able to ask a question (I had several in mind) of the CCG but I believe that the whole process is purely down to available resources. If this locality wishes to retain anything other than a day centre then they'll have to be prepared to fight for it (closing date for public comment, 9th April). Or move to Oxford.

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