



## New Romney Town Council – Press Release

Issue Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018



**“Helping to make things better”**

### **New Romney Town Council’s update on its Campaign to improve local health service provision in the Town and across Romney Marsh**

During a meeting of Full Council on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January, the Deputy Mayor of New Romney, Councillor Patricia Rolfe, responded to a formal public question from a representative of the local Residents Association regarding health care concerns and the Council’s campaign to help improve local services. Councillor Rolfe – who has led the campaign for over two years - provided the following statement:

Quote:

I will endeavour to answer your question regarding the Town Council’s ongoing campaign to highlight issues with local health care provision.

The Council has, since August 2015 proactively campaigned to highlight key issues of concern regarding local health services.

I have chaired many meetings involving NHS England, the South Kent Coast Clinical Commissioning Group (hereinafter referred to as the CCG), SECamb and others and have over the intervening period liaised with those bodies who deliver health services in this area.

Lack of Local GP’s, the unreasonably high use of Locums and poor SECamb response times have all been highlighted (as well as other issues) and we have been promoting the need for a new purpose built health centre that caters for 21<sup>st</sup> Century needs and aspirations of local residents. Some progress has been made in many areas and I am happy to report that the CCG have ensured that additional resources have been directed in this locality – such as a paramedic and car to support local clinicians.

Importantly, the CCG have positively responded to the need to assess the feasibility of a new health centre and a meeting of the first steering group has taken place to assess location options and discuss other linked issues.

No timescale can be set regarding delivery since there are a range of issues that will need to be resolved and addressed – funding, business plan, range of services, land and planning issues, as well as the engagement of local clinicians and other health care services which are key to the success of a project as complex as this.

The CCG have commented in general that:

Quote:

*They attended the Church Lane PPG this week, we will have attended Orchard House, Oak Hall ... and Martello later next week, so engaging with all 4 practices on the Marsh. Ray Berry, Head of Development has explained the process..... and ensured that PPGs are aware that .... the CCG is working with and will continue to support primary care to ensure patients receive care.*

Unquote.

To my knowledge, Church Lane Surgery will not be closing. The CCG will be introducing a new 'interim health services hub' at the Romney Marsh Day Centre later this year and are working with local practices on creating a new 'health service delivery model' for the area which is GP led.

I would rather collaborate with, than berate the bodies that are responsible for delivering local services. Working together and applying both local knowledge and their clinical and professional expertise is the best way to ensure an improved and sustainable delivery model is created for the benefit of all local people. This has been the basis of the Town Council's campaign and long may it continue along those lines

As a final note, the CCG's officers are dedicated and committed to providing first class health care across the area through working closely with local GP's and other health care providers and its officers have willingly engaged with this Council during our campaign. If local residents do have specific concerns then it is open to them to write to the CCG, meanwhile the Council is acting as an information conduit to ensure the CCG is aware of local issues.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the issue of health service provision is outside the normal remit of a first tier local authority such as a Town Council – however, New Romney Town Council is not afraid to put its head above the parapet and raise issues that are of concern to local residents whenever it is appropriate to do so. In progressing this campaign, Council members have put our heads way above the parapet, whilst adhering to strict Council protocol, raising our concerns at the highest levels – including with the Secretary of State for Health – Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt. The CCG has allocated resources to both ensure the wider health care model is fit for purpose and also to assessing the viability of a new Health Centre in the area and the Council is doing what it can to support that good work

Unquote.

The Mayor of New Romney – Councillor Peter Coe commented: *'New Romney Town Council continues to work tirelessly to highlight local concern about healthcare provision on Romney Marsh and the issue of this press release is communicating evidence of another example of New Romney Town Council acting in the interests of the residents to the best of its ability and influence.'*

At last Monday's meeting, the Council also discussed the issue of poor local Ambulance response times. SECamb – the local Ambulance services provider - is failing to meet the nationally prescribed deadlines for attending callouts. The matter had been noted by a local resident and Councillors voted unanimously to raise the issue with the Secretary of State for Health – Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP and others. All members recognised that this is a national problem, however, the negative impact is intensified in rural areas such as the Romney Marsh due to the poor public transport infrastructure.