

Appendix 4 - Notes of Meeting 19 April 2016

Cllr Mandy Perkins - Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Executive Member

Lisa Hughes – WHBC

Simon Chivers – WHBC

Chris Carter – WHBC

Sue Fogden – East and North Hertfordshire and Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs)

Laura Griggs – NHS England

The purpose of the meeting was for Cllr Perkins, on behalf of other elected members, to gain an understanding from colleagues in the NHS as to how and when they respond to planning applications and seek planning obligations payments.

Cllr Perkins started by setting out the concern amongst members that responses from the NHS bodies are not being made on all relevant planning applications and that this may mean that they are missing out on funding opportunities.

SF set out the differing responsibilities of NHS England and the CCGs, that being that NHS England is principally responsible for the provision of GP services and that the CCGs are responsible for commissioning the types of care usually provided in the community, main hospitals as well as mental health care.

SF explained that recent reorganisations in the NHS had presented significant challenges in terms of effective engagement with the planning system, particularly in terms of responding to consultations on planning applications. However, in Welwyn Hatfield, NHS England and the CCG are now seeking to work together on responses to planning applications.

SF noted however that the 21 day timescale for responses to planning applications was often very challenging for the NHS to meet, particularly if they did not have any “off the shelf” schemes towards which any planning obligations could be directed. It was discussed that larger planning applications which often result in a greater need for health services, can often have a longer negotiation period before a decision is made and that in such circumstances it may be possible for earlier engagement and consultation to enable an appropriate scheme to be put together in order to justify a planning obligations contribution.

Alongside the issue of the length of the consultation period, SF and LG raised the problem of the CIL regulations pooling restrictions, the so called “rule of five”. This means that no more than five planning obligations can be pooled together towards one specific piece or type of infrastructure. This presents difficulties for consultation responses as it relies upon “oven ready” schemes for increasing healthcare capacity in the area of the borough where development is proposed. Projects for enhancing or increasing healthcare capacity often emerge over lengthy periods of time and it is not always possible for a scheme to be advanced enough at the point at which a justification for planning obligations is required. This pooling restriction, and indeed the uncertainties with it, is therefore a constraint on the ability of the NHS to collect monies from proposed developments.

MP expressed concerns from residents about how additional healthcare facilities will be provided in the borough as the population continues to grow and new residential developments come through the system. SF explained that the NHS bodies use the same population projections, that the council includes in the local plan, for managing service capacity. It was agreed that residents in some parts of the borough do face challenges in securing appointments at their nearest surgery.

SF explained that investment priorities for surgeries are based on a number of factors and criteria NHSE has launched a Primary Care Transformation Fund and the CCG on behalf of its practices will be submitting bids by 30 June 2016. NHSE will confirm which bids were approved to the next stage by September 2016.

SC noted that NHS England and the CCG are in ongoing dialogue with the planning policy team on infrastructure requirements to support housing growth arising from the Local Plan. A further meeting in this regard is scheduled for 3rd of May to discuss the current update of the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP).

MP suggested that NHS England and the CCG may wish to attend the Hertfordshire Infrastructure and Investment panel (HIIP) as there has not been any update to that group from the NHS for some time. This would also help to raise the profile of this issue county wide.