

PARTNERSHIP FOR HEALTH



FRIENDS OF DAVENPORT HOUSE

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RED HOUSE HEALTH CENTRE HOPES REVIVED

Renewed hopes that the long-promised NHS Health and Wellbeing Centre on the Harpenden Memorial Hospital 'Red House' site in Carlton Road might actually materialise were raised at a public meeting held by Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group (HVCCG) in mid-September.

For most people in Harpenden it came 'out of the blue', after a year or more of mounting local frustration – even despair – especially for the Friends of the Red House and the Red House Forum pressure group, that the Centre would ever see the light of day.

Earlier this year the announcement that the responsibility for adult community services was to be handed over from Hertfordshire Community Trust (HCT) to a much larger, and seemingly more faceless, body, the Central London Community Healthcare Trust (CLCH) appeared only (to borrow a currently popular phrase) 'to kick the can further down the road'.

At the September meeting David Evans, HVCCG's director of commissioning, acknowledged the frustration resulting from the evident lack of progress on the Red House project, but pledged that the programme would start to be delivered 'from October 1'. Kathy Walker, CLCH's director of operations, cautioned however that (in mid-September) approval from the Department of Health for the transfer of the Red House site to CLCH was still awaited.

Ms Walker asserted that the transfer of responsibility to a body with 'Central London' in its title would not be detrimental to local Harpenden needs. The Trust was, she added, already working in other parts of Hertfordshire – notably in providing sexual health services – as well as in eleven London boroughs, employing 3500 people on 500 sites.

Though the range of health and wellbeing services planned for the new Centre were included in the original proposals set out two years ago, a number of key changes relating to the use of the site

emerged at the meeting. The most significant change is for the now dilapidated 120-year-old Red House itself to be retained and refurbished as part of the Health and Wellbeing Centre, rather than being sold for conversion into apartments to the developer of new housing on the site.

In addition to the main funding for the Centre, to be raised through the sale of 'surplus' land on the site for housing, the NHS is due to contribute £300,000 towards the refurbishment of the Red House for ongoing medical services and the new Centre's office accommodation.

Following the formal presentations, the meeting was opened to the floor in a wide-ranging Q&A session. Not surprisingly, in view of the long 'deafening silence' after the project's trumpeted unveiling in late 2017, the most pointed questions from the audience concerned the scheduled timetable, which will crucially involve the upgrade and extension of the existing Stewarts facility and the sale of a large part of the site for private housing.

Ian Daccus, CLCH's director of estates, said that from the October 2019 project start date it was likely to take 12 to 18 months to get through the local authority planning approval process. That indicated final completion in three to three-and-a-half years time, by early 2023 but, in Mr Baccus's words, 'quicker if we can!'

But as one meeting attendee pointed out, given the transitory nature of administrative posts in the public sector, in three years time there could well have been further structural NHS upheavals and changes of responsibility in the Healthcare Trust and Commissioning Group areas of operation. Many people accordingly came away from the Red House meeting just hoping that the latest announcements were not another false dawn.

Report prepared by Alan Bunting, Editor for Harpenden Society News.

RED HOUSE—FURTHER COMMENT

I also attended the public meeting on the future of the Harpenden Memorial Hospital site and largely agree with the account given by Alan Bunting overleaf.

Inevitably, the meeting was overshadowed by past failures to take matters forward and at best Central London Community Healthcare (CLCH) will need time to decide precisely what it intends for the site in the longer term.

The contract given to CLCH for Hertfordshire contains the provision for a wide range of community health services ranging from physio, rheumatology, leg ulcers and phlebectomy to dermatology, diabetes and bladder and bowel treatment (and much more). But which of these might come to the Red House site is still to be decided and will depend upon assessments of local (Harpenden) demand for particular services and those that will be provided at similar centres in St Albans and Hemel Hempstead. There is much to play for.

Are there grounds for optimism this time around? Such health and welfare hubs continue to match NHS policy in its attempt to take services currently provided in hospitals and to put these in local communities. The government has also allocated extra resources to the NHS over the next few years although barely more than to meet growing demand.

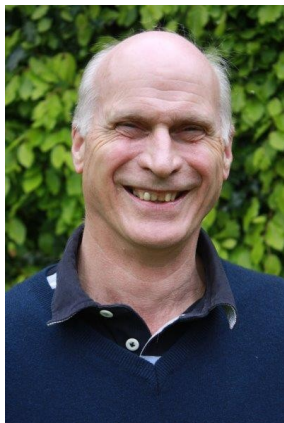
Second, the meeting was sponsored by BOTH CLCH and Herts Valleys CCG which implies a financial commitment to pay for services at the site, not always previously forthcoming, to match capital spending on the site.

Third, the recent establishment of a Primary Care Network, Harpenden Health, incorporating the three Harpenden Surgeries, in principle creates a better platform for local integrated healthcare in conjunction with the proposed hub.

Only time will tell.

Richard Munton

**Chairman Friends of
Davenport House**



The St Albans and Harpenden Patients' Group (SAPG) Newsletter of August includes the following items:

1. The incidence of Measles in the UK has recently increased. As a result, the World Health Organisation no longer considers us to have eliminated this illness. It is possible that the increase is related to fewer children being vaccinated.
2. The current plans for West Herts hospitals were included in the July Bulletin. The newsletter notes that, despite the boards of the West Herts Hospital Trust and Herts Valley CCG adopting the option to develop existing hospital sites, there is still some local opposition to this plan.
3. The L & D has been granted £99m for a new building for critical care, maternity and operating theatres. See last Bulletin.
4. From the 1 October 2019 the responsibility for providing Adult Community Services in West Herts will move to the Central London Community Health and NHS Trust (CLCH). One of the group's clinical bases will be in the new St Albans Health and Wellbeing Centre in the St Albans District Council's Offices. Please see the report in this Bulletin about the Red House.
5. Services for Mental Health in Hertfordshire are provided by Herts Partnership Foundation Trust (HPFT) – which has recently been judged Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission – and the Children and Young People's Mental Health service (CAMHS). HPFT is working to improve access to its services. In West Herts, Mental Health Support Teams are working with schools to support pupils who might suffer from anxiety and depression.

Other Local News

Rennie Grove Hospice Care has launched an appeal to raise £1m "to transform Grove House into a centre of excellence for palliative and end-of-life care, giving everyone in the local community the chance to live well for as long as they have." More information can be found at www.renniegrove.org

Pauline Allison

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