

Cllr Lorna Dupré

MONTHLY REPORT MARCH 2023

PRIORS FIELD GP PRACTICE

Residents have been shocked and dismayed by the announcement of the closure of the GP surgery at Priors Field in Sutton with effect from the end of 31 March. I have launched a petition at change.org/save-gp-services-at-priors-field which has attracted over 1,900 online signatures. Paper copies have also been circulated to immediately local parishes for distribution—their help in this is gratefully received.

GP practices are not run by the NHS, or the Government, or the Council—they are small businesses, which contract with NHS England to supply GP services in a particular locality at a particular price.

Since the leaking of the closure news on Facebook, we have learned that the Fenland Group Practice decided in November not to renew their contract for the practice at Priors Field. NHS England then sought another practice to take over provision at Priors Field, or other GPs willing to work from there, but were unsuccessful. The decision was then made to close the surgery.

The nearly 6,000 patients of the surgery will shortly receive letters telling them to which of around ten other practices they have been transferred. Many will be transferred to the Fenland Group practices in Doddington, Manea, Ramsey, and Wimblington, but many will be transferred to Ely, Haddenham and elsewhere. After 31 March residents unhappy with their allocation will be able to request a transfer to a practice of their choosing, bearing in mind that the practice in the question may not have capacity to accept them. The NHS is under an obligation to provide everyone with a GP, but not in a location of their choice.

The reasons why the situation at Priors Field has arisen are many and complex, including the shortage of GPs across the country, the NHS funding mechanism not serving GPs in this area well, and issues over the building.

The Priors Field building is in the ownership of Dr Cargill, who is still a partner in the practice. Its use therefore cannot be commanded by the NHS or anyone else.

Dai Harding, Mags Robinson and I from the Patient Participation Group have met with the Executive Manager and Advanced Nurse Practitioner at the practice, and at the time of writing are due to meet with Dr Gary Howsam of the Integrated Care System on Tuesday 28 February.

We have made clear how badly we feel communication with residents about this decision was handled, but our absolute focus is on securing health services of

some kind in Sutton for residents of Sutton and the surrounding villages. These may well not be the same as the services we currently have, but we want the Integrated Care System to be as creative as possible in offering solutions for our communities.

Transport has naturally emerged as a major issue, with no public transport between our villages and some of the locations in question, and many local residents unable to drive. The suggestion that the current volunteer community transport schemes could step in is wide of the mark: not only do they not have the capacity, but there would be practical issues such as the time spent waiting while the patient was waiting to be attended to.

My fellow ward district councillor Mark Inskip and I have written to Steve Barclay, MP for our villages (except Wentworth) and also Secretary of State for Health, inviting him to attend a public meeting in Sutton at a date and time of his choosing, to explain to local residents what he proposes to do to secure NHS services in Sutton into the future.

We will continue to work as councillors, and with the Patient Participation Group, to achieve the best resolution possible for our villages.

FULL COUNCIL

Group changes

Geoff Seeff (Lib Dem) won the St Neots The Eatons county council by-election on 16 February. The composition of the County Council is now

- Conservative 27
- Liberal Democrat 22
- Labour 9
- Independent 3

Budget

Like three quarters of all councils in the country this year, Cambridgeshire County Council was forced to increase its portion of the council tax by 4.99 per cent, the maximum permitted.

As a Joint Administration we faced up to the financial challenge facing the county which results from a legacy of poor choices by the outgoing administration, along with the failure of the Government for a number of years now to introduce a fair funding formula. Without this, we receive a much worse deal than many other councils. Where we have had to make savings, we have done so carefully, and certainly not imposed the kind of savage cuts that some opposition councillors have mistakenly claimed.

Full Council meeting

The next meeting of the Full Council will take place on Tuesday 21 March. I have submitted a motion for debate on the Government's decision to introduce new Voter ID requirements for elections.

I have been working with County Council officers on ways in which the Council can support the effort to ensure the many people without the required photo ID apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate so that they are not denied their right to vote.

ENVIRONMENT & GREEN INVESTMENT

Waste contract

The County Council's long-term waste disposal PFI contract with Thalia at Waterbeach continues to be a major preoccupation of the Council. Work is continuing on options for the odour emission abatement required by the Environment Agency, and Government changes to food waste collection arrangements are proving challenging.

Farm tenants

I chaired a meeting of the Council's farm tenants on 14 February at Quy Mill. This was well attended and lively, with a good presentation on regenerative farming techniques and a lot of interest in carbon.

Swaffham Prior

There continues to be ongoing media interest in the Swaffham Prior renewable energy project, including from the BBC1 national morning magazine programme and the property section of the *Sunday Times*. The first homes in the village are already receiving heat from the new system.

Wisbech incinerator

I presented the Council's case against the planning application for the Wisbech incinerator to the Planning Inspectorate's Examination on Thursday 24 February.

Waste water treatment plant

Anglian Water have withdrawn their application for the move of the waste water treatment plant from North East Cambridge to Horningsea, which we expect to be revised and resubmitted.

Water industry consultations

A number of water industry consultations are in progress at the moment, including Anglian Water's Water Resources Management Plan, and their Storm Overflow consultation.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

Local Highway Improvement schemes

Sutton's application for an HGV weight limit through the village will be considered by officers using the new criteria developed by the working group I chaired. It will be treated as a 'non-complex' bid and therefore will not be scored by councillors. Haddenham has also applied for a weight limit on the A1421 from Haddenham crossroads to Witcham Toll.

LHI bids being presented to councillors for recommendation to the Highways & Transport Committee will be considered at a panel meeting on Friday 12 May.

The contractor whose supplier is manufacturing the solar studs for Little Downham's bid for the B1411 advised on 21 February that the supplier had said it would be one to two weeks before the order was ready to ship. Council officers have asked the contractor to prepare to mobilise as soon as practicably possible once the studs are received.

From now until 28 April, applications for new 20MPH speed limits can be submitted by any person as long as they have the support of their local parish or town council and county councillor. Once an application has been submitted it will be processed and prioritised, until all schemes have been delivered.

Meanwhile on the Combined Authority

The Combined Authority Board continues to focus on its Improvement work. It has agreed to appoint an Executive Director Resources & Performance, and an Executive Director Economy & Growth.

MEET YOUR COUNCILLOR

- **Sutton:** Cllr Mark Inskip and I will hold our surgery in the school Community Room on Monday 6 March and Monday 3 April, 6:30-7:30PM.
- **Witchford:** my next surgery will be on Monday 27 March, 6:30-7:30PM, in St Andrew's Hall in Main Street.
- **Little Downham:** I hope to be at the Book Café in the Village Hall on Friday 31 March 10:00-11:00AM.

Meanwhile, I can be contacted

- By email at lorna@lornadupre.org.uk
- By Facebook Messenger
- By phone on 07930 337596

Cllr Lorna Dupré

County Councillor for the Sutton division