

OPEN LETTER REGARDING THE CONGLETON WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

In the year that the National Health Service celebrates its 70th anniversary, we in Congleton would like to congratulate the Service on all that they have achieved and to say how much we appreciate the health care services that are provided, in particular by the Congleton War Memorial Hospital which has benefited the residents of Congleton for over 150 years.

We are looking for support from East Cheshire NHS Trust and other health and well-being partners to ensure that these vital services continue to be provided in our growing town of Congleton especially in light of the predicted growth of the town in the near future. Congleton currently has a population of around 27,000 and planned development for around 3700 more homes will increase the population by about 10,000 people over the next 10 years.

This increase in population means there will be an even greater demand for the services provided by the War Memorial Hospital and to not have those services will increase demands on the current GP practices in the town that are already under pressure to provide much needed services to the existing population.

We have an above average percentage of older residents who require a greater need for health service provision, not having the provision of services provided by the Congleton War Memorial will seriously impact many residents who live in and around Congleton.

We are aware of the pressures on the NHS and the challenges facing our local health trust, and along with local residents, are seeking reassurance that the ECNHS Trust will support local people in lobbying for the vital services provided at Congleton War Memorial Hospital. Any reduction in these services would leave the residents with many issues to contend with.

We know that the War Memorial Hospital is a very important part of the health service for the people of Congleton and the surrounding parishes.

At the War Memorial Hospital Congleton residents benefit from a Minor Injuries Unit, X-ray and physiotherapy departments, blood clinics, numerous specialist clinics and meetings with consultants.

If services were moved to Macclesfield, travelling to use alternative facilities will have a real cost for local people both in terms of time and money. In addition the inconvenience or inability to travel could lead to people not attending appointments

or being seen by minor injuries, leading to deterioration in their condition, and in the longer term higher costs for the NHS. It would also increase congestion on the Macclesfield Road which is something we are trying hard to reduce.

In addition the hospital has a 28 bed intermediate care ward, enabling people who still need a hospital bed to move out of a more acute hospital and recover closer to home where it is easier for friends and family to visit and aid their recovery. We believe that there is scope to further improve health services in Congleton, possibly by delivering more services across the adult social care sector at The War Memorial Hospital site.

In recent months there has been a reduction in the opening hours of the Minor Injuries Unit. A recent Freedom of Information request revealed that the Minor Injuries Unit had been closed for 1,725 hours or 21% of the time over the past three years. This is on top of a reduction in advertised weekend opening times of 36%.

This is a concern for local people and a trend that we would like to see reversed.

Although there is no current public consultation on the future of the War Memorial Hospital, as a town we are concerned with the changes that have happened in neighbouring towns such as Knutsford and the detrimental impact it has had so that the residents of Congleton are not allowed to suffer in this way are extremely keen to avoid this happening to Congleton.

Congleton Town Council would welcome the opportunity to work with EC NHS Trust to look at innovative ways to enhance the use of the War Memorial Hospital site to further benefit our community and secure the future of health services for residents in Congleton and the surrounding parishes.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Suzie Akers Smith

Town Mayor

Chairman of Congleton's Health and Well-Being Working Group