

**Proposed Health Centre for Handbridge : A Community Proposal
- Health Partners' Views**

Thursday 7th April 2011 from 1.00 – 2.00 pm
Handbridge Medical Centre, Greenway Street, Handbridge

Attendance:

Michelle Talgam – Chester Area Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Jan Walters – Community Engagement Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council
Samantha Jeffery – Practice Manager, Handbridge Medical Centre
Dr Carole Holme – Practice Doctor and Partner, Handbridge Medical Centre
Sarah Murray – Clinical Commissioning, NHS Western Cheshire Primary Care Trust

Apologies:

Local ward councillors gave their apologies due to other commitments and the pre-election publicity restrictions in place at the time of the meeting

Tour of the Premises:

Before the start of the meeting, Michelle Talgam and Jan Walters were given a tour of the Surgery so they could see the facilities available to patients and the challenges the Doctors are faced with in relation to managing the centre which includes lack of office space, high temperatures during summer months, limited consulting space on ground floor and limited parking provision.

Summary of Discussions:

Prior to the meeting the paper setting out residents' views given at the Community Forum meeting was circulated

1. Introductions and Overview of Roles:

The premises are in the private ownership of 3 of the doctors and not the NHS / Primary Care Trust.

The Doctors, the staff of the surgery and the PCT all fully support the residents in their aspiration to have a new Medical Centre which could accommodate a wide range of health services under one roof.

The practice is keen to move to a new purpose built Health Centre along with other health orientated services for local residents, for example a pharmacy, dentist, social workers etc, and with adequate parking provision.

Previously the Doctors had developed a business plan and had discussions with West Cheshire College about the development of such a facility, but unfortunately it was not possible to take this further.

While the proposal of a new Health Centre would be likely to have the full support of the PCT, financial constraints are the main obstacle.

2. Current health service provision in Handbridge / for Handbridge community:

Handbridge has been identified by the PCT as an area where facilities do need to be up-dated but it is not the highest priority in their area of Western Cheshire and therefore is not scheduled for improvements in the immediate future – it is not possible at present to put any time scale on this.

Currently there are no facilities at the Surgery or in the area for:

- Allied health services such as physiotherapy, chiropody etc
- NHS dentistry other than for children.
- Health education e.g. diet, healthy eating, diabetes

To access health visitors and midwives, residents now have to travel to the Lache Childrens Centre. This is due to national policy and not a local initiative. The Handbridge practice opposed this change in service as they could for see the problems this would have for residents and they were concerned about the risks of fragmentation of health care. Access by public transport for many residents is costly and difficult to access.

3. Any Future Plans / Changes to health services and facilities for Handbridge

There is considered to be a lack of suitable existing buildings in the area that could be converted to an all inclusive health centre. Conversion of premises to a building suitable for healthcare delivery of today is seldom appropriate. There is also limited space for a new build. Possible sites that could be explored were identified as follows:-

- a) Part of the West Cheshire College site – this has been explored in the past by the Practice but they were not re-approached by the College when their facilities were being upgraded.
- b) Greenbank on Eccleston Avenue - too inaccessible from centre of Handbridge and for elderly / vulnerable residents
- c) The now empty Royal Bank of Scotland/Army Western Command building on Queens Road - this building would actually be too big for a health centre but part

of the building could be used if an investor could be sought to convert the building and incorporate the health centre into it.

d) Queens Park High School Playing Fields - the most accessible site was considered to be on the school playing fields opposite Queens Park High. It is perceived that the field is seldom used by the school as it is often too wet to play on. It was suggested that the school may consider releasing some of the field if funding was provided to convert some of the other sports area which is on campus to astro- turf; this would then provide an all year round facility.

NB. If a new build or move were to take place the current building which is jointly owned by 3 doctors would be sold.

The lack of community facilities, other than the church hall and school halls, was also identified and these could be incorporated into any new build.

4. Way Forward / Next Steps:

- a) Michelle Talgam and Jan Walters to investigate the former Bank / Army building for suitability / cost
- b) In the interim group health and wellbeing sessions to be explored with local community groups and Members if suitable locations can be found with Community Health Workers, PCT Health Improvement and Council's Area Working via Jan Walters.

These could link to the Chester Healthy Living Centre services.

Suggestions for group sessions included:-

- Healthy eating sessions including sessions for children
- Meal planning and cooking sessions
- Walking and exercise groups
- Mothers group session (after dropping off school children) i.e. based on the 'Tea and Toast' model used in Lache
- Health related sessions such as stopping smoking and diabetes