Emma Stephens, Maldon District Councillor for Tollesbury

MD Councillor for Tollesbury

- For those who don't know it, Tollesbury is a village on a peninsula in the Blackwater, to the east of Maldon town
- Tollesbury residents are already ten miles and half an hour from St Peter's hospital by car or bus
- That's before you take into account the distances from St Peter's to Braintree or Brentwood
- For much of what I am presenting today I will use Tollesbury as my example
- But the facts apply to most of the villages in Maldon District
- And it's the District I speak for

I'm going to cover 5 aspects of the proposals:

1. OPD proposals
2. Stroke rehab proposals
3. Birthing unit proposals
4. The consultation survey
5. The ultimate cause of this situation and its solution

1. **OPD proposals**
   - I'm broadly in favour of an OPD being located in any suitable **single** site
   - Provided it remains **WITHIN** Maldon **TOWN**
   - But the consultation refers to OPD services being relocated "in and around Maldon"
   - It doesn't state if that's Maldon town or Maldon district
   - Latest announcement says three of the sites being considered are SWF, Braintree and Burnham – none of those is "in or around Maldon", never mind Maldon town
   - Braintree is suggested for Xray
   - Those needing Xray include those least able to make the journey from Tollesbury to Braintree by public transport, as that involves three buses and takes 2 hours
   - To SWF from Tollesbury is from 2 hours to 3 hours 12 minutes each way
   - It involves either
     - a bus and three trains - or
     - three buses
   - Depending on the time you need to arrive
   - It costs £12 for the 3-bus option

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- Or by rail it is £23.60 train + £4 bus = £27.60 per appointment
- Very few people are eligible for hospital transport
- NHS policy states:
  "NHS-funded patient transportation is reserved for when it is considered essential …

  "If [the patient has] a medical need [eg they] require oxygen… have a communicable disease… [they are] immunocompromised… etc
  https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/B1244-nepts-eligibility-criteria.pdf
- So hospital transport is rarely an option for most of us
- The Community 360 charity provides transport to its members but their website states:
  "due to high demand we are currently unable to accept new members to the scheme".
- https://www.community360.org.uk/what-we-do/community-transport/
- If OPD clinics are scattered it will be far harder to manage staff
- And probably require more reception and maintenance staff – or poorer reception and maintenance services
- If OPD clinics were scattered all over town today, you'd want to build a new hospital to centralise them
- So separating them feels like a backward step
- Easier for NHS to quietly drop a single service than a whole hospital
  eg You have already quietly dropped the end of life care beds and the general rehab beds from St Peter's with no consultation
- So within 15 years, as leases on various sites expire, Maldon could have no OPD clinics left
- Moving any OPD services out of Maldon town centre will discriminate against the elderly, those with disabilities, those living in rural locations
- Yet the NHS Constitution for England states:
  "You have the right to expect your NHS to assess the health requirements of your community and to commission and put in place the services to meet those needs"

  And

  "You have the right not to be unlawfully discriminated against

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in the provision of NHS services including on grounds of …disability, age, …" https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/the-nhs-constitution-for-england#patients-and-the-public-your-rights-and-the-nhs-pledges-to-you

2. Stroke rehab

- I am NOT in favour of moving stroke rehabilitation beds away from Maldon because of the distance and journey time
- It's 34 miles from Tollesbury to Brentwood – just 10 to Maldon
- Starting with climate change, the NHS states:
- "For emissions we can influence, we will reach net zero by 2045, with an ambition to reach an 80% reduction by 2036 to 2039." https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/a-net-zero-nhs/
- Tripling people's journey times to hospital simply doesn't match that statement.

- Moving onto stroke rehab patients and their families, it's likely that many people could not visit their loved-one in Brentwood every day from Tollesbury
- Picture if you will, a man who has had a stroke and is now in rehab at Brentwood
- His wife has never driven, or as she's got older she's stopped driving, or she now only drives local, familiar routes. She certainly doesn't do the A12.
- I know A LOT of women in Tollesbury who fit this profile – and this will be replicated across all the small villages in the District
- So now our lady must travel to Brentwood by public transport to visit her husband
- If she were travelling just to St Peter's, it's just one bus ride, which takes half an hour
- To Brentwood will take her 1¼ hours each way
- She must get the bus to Witham; a train to Shenfield; then a bus to Brentwood hospital
- If this lady is a pensioner then the bus is free
- But the off peak train fare is £16.80 a day
- So almost exactly £100 a week
- If the lady is not yet 66 then she must also pay bus fares
- We all know it's only £2 on the bus at the moment BUT

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A) That won't last
B) That's £2 PER bus journey

- Our lady's journey uses 4 buses so that would be another £8 every day => £48 a week
- So bus and train fares together total £24.80 per DAY, or £148.80 a week
- Compare that with £24 pw to St Peter's by bus – or free for a pensioner
- The train is cheaper if you have a senior railcard but if my resident and her husband have a 2-together card instead, then she can't use that to travel alone
- My resident also can't visit her husband on Sundays at all as there are no buses
- Of course that applies to getting to St Peter's too, but most Tollesbury residents can probably get a lift to St Peter's – that's far less likely to Brentwood
- There is no hospital transport for visitors
- So, my lady can only afford to visit her husband twice a week
- That won't just impact her and your patient
- The staff in a busy hospital ward rely on visitors to help patients to feed; to take patients outside for fresh air; to take laundry home
- I've requested evidence from the NHS on the impacts on a stroke rehab patient of their spouse being unable to visit every day => no response
- So we have adverse impacts on both the patient and their visitor – in terms of time, money, and probably recuperation
- Moving the stroke rehab out of Maldon town centre discriminates against the elderly, those with disabilities, those living in rural locations
- Yet the NHS Constitution for England states:
  "You have the right to expect your NHS to assess the health requirements of your community and to commission and put in place the services to meet those needs"

  And

  "You have the right not to be unlawfully discriminated against in the provision of NHS services including on grounds of …disability, age, …"
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/the-nhs-constitution-for-

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3. **Birthing unit**
   - I am NOT in favour of moving the standalone, midwife-led birthing unit away from Maldon town because of the distance and journey time
   - It's 19 miles to WJC from Tollesbury - just 10 to St Peter's
   - It is likely that most people travel by private transport when in labour
   - But it is only 30 minutes by bus from Tollesbury to St Peter's
   - So given that the unit is for non-complex births, going by bus might be OK for some women
   - But to WJC it is **over 2 hours** by bus
   - And it means using three buses!
   - So most people will have to travel by private car
   - Google says 35 to 60 mins by car – my experience is over 60 mins at busy times
     - (to St Peter's is 20 to 30 mins)
   - To be in labour within the confines of a car can be like torture
   - Yet the NHS is making this journey last twice as long for women in this District
   - I wanted to know if the E of England Ambulance Service will take women in labour to WJC?
   - Well, for weeks their website has been out of action for all but the most basic details
   - But three other ambulance service websites I looked at say:
   - Normal labour is not an emergency. Therefore, it is not appropriate to call an ambulance for transportation to the hospital. Should you call 999, you could be … told to make your own way to the hospital.
   - Will there be special arrangements by the ambulance service for women in labour the Maldon District?
   - At one of your presentations, you mentioned offering more home births:
   - Has that started?
   - It seems unlikely if there are so few midwives that Broomfield had to keep borrowing them from St Peter's
   - Today is about evidence, so I'd like to know that
   - I've also requested evidence from the NHS about the impacts on a

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safe birth of being in labour in a car for over an hour

- Are the outcomes worsened by journey length? => No reply yet
- Moving the birthing unit out of Maldon town centre discriminates against women who don't want / need an obstetrician-led birth and against those living in rural locations
- Yet the NHS Constitution for England states:
  "You have the right to expect your NHS to assess the health requirements of your community and to commission and put in place the services to meet those needs"

  And

  "You have the right not to be unlawfully discriminated against in the provision of NHS services including on grounds of … pregnancy and maternity …"
  https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england/the-nhs-constitution-for-england#patients-and-the-public-your-rights-and-the-nhs-pledges-to-you

4. The survey

- Online:
  - The survey is hard to find unless you're sent the link
  - It has risen in Google search results over the last month but at first it wasn't on the first page of results
  - There is no link to it from the most obvious page to visit: https://www.nhs.uk/services/service-directory/st-peter-s-hospital/N10866740
  - Even on the right page the consultation page is hard to find, as the page is so long and cluttered (3,800 words): https://virtualviews.midandsouthessex.ics.nhs.uk/changes-to-services
  - This page says the survey closes 21st March even though extended to April [Update 20th March: The new end date is stated but so is the original date – unclear]
- Paper surveys:
  - As a Councillor I find repeatedly that residents may have digital access…

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  - …but they only use it if they absolutely must – if there's no other option
  - Clearly filling in a survey is not mandatory so just it's not something they'll do
  - And of course some have **no** digital access: Ofcom figures show 6% of people are completely digitally excluded https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0022/234364/digital-exclusion-review-2022.pdf
  - And that's higher among older people…
  - …but it is older people who use hospitals more
  - Despite this, paper surveys were not provided automatically to GP surgeries
  - They were put in libraries but rural villages like Tollesbury don't have libraries
  - Not put in cafes, village halls, etc
  - **I've** done that in Tollesbury
  - Other members may have done the same
  - But it will be patchy
  - Also no return address on the paper surveys so did you get them all back?
  - In all, how can you rely on the survey results?
- The stroke rehab "choice":
  - For stroke rehab you have given people two unwanted choices
  - If they pick the lesser of two evils it will allow you to say most people preferred option A or option B
  - But that's only because you haven't asked people what they would actually choose…
  - …which for Maldon District residents would certainly be "keep it in Maldon"
- The birthing unit "choice":
  - For the birthing unit you are only offering one option
  - So that's not a consultation – it means you think it's already in the bag

5. **The ultimate cause of this situation, and its solution**
   - The prompt for all of this is an abject failure to maintain St Peter's Hospital buildings

 cllr.emma.stephens@maldon.gov.uk

- The situation we are in has not been driven by any strategy or policy
- It's not because patients will benefit in the slightest from being treated in other towns
- It's just a desperate last-ditch reaction to old lifts, old sewers, and old floors
- This situation has not suddenly arisen through some terrible unforeseeable disaster
- It's come about inevitably – entirely predictably - from always putting the needs of Maldon District residents last
- That's not good enough
- I say you need to go back to the Department for Health
- Have the courage to demand enough money to deliver appropriate healthcare in appropriate accommodation to Maldon District residents

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