

Councillor Ian Leake
Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Bracknell Forest Council
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27 January 2015

Dear Councillor Leake

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me on the phone last week about our plans to de-commission the Broadmoor sirens in future. It was a very helpful conversation and I appreciate your positive response in this matter.

This letter sets out our response to the committee's request that the trust carry out additional work in the form of a conditions survey of the sirens and an acoustic survey plus further information on alternative technologies and the schools cascade. It also sets out our proposal and the timings around de-commissioning the sirens.

At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd October 2014, I agreed to consider some of suggestions made by the councillors present. I stressed that an over-riding consideration was that any changes to the proposals by West London Mental Health NHS Trust to partly replace and decommission the sirens should not cost more than initially estimated within those proposals.

I also agreed that I would seek an additional and more extensive conditions survey of all the sirens located within Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough, in order to provide a best estimate of the lifespan of the siren towers. Additionally I agreed to take further advice on the acoustic velocity of the replacement sirens.

The conditions survey has been completed and it is clear that extensive remedial works are required over and above the requirement to replace the actual sirens.

I have also been informed that a detailed Radio Frequency (RF) and acoustic survey is required to identify if the sirens can operate by using RF technology. This survey carries additional considerable cost.

Assistant Chief Executive Victor Nicholls and members of the Community Safety Team were able to spend three hours at the hospital recently and visited a number of wards, patient areas and our control room.

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Members of Wokingham Borough Oversight and Scrutiny Committee were able to conduct a similar visit in November. I understand they found these visits valuable in helping to understand how we care for our patients and manage security and risk.

At the meeting on 22nd October, one of your councillors enquired about alternative technology - in particular geographical texting applications for smart phones. Although it wasn't mentioned at the time, in November 2013 John Hourihan invited a presentation from a UK based company Ping4 on how this technology might be used to support the cascade system. This presentation was attended by your Community Safety Manager, Ian Boswell, other members of his department, Thames Valley Police and Surrey Police. The general view is that this technology is very much in its infancy. For systems such as Ping4 to work, users must have smart phones, with the application installed and the user must be a subscriber to that application.

I believe that the schools cascade system continues to be an effective tool for communicating with all educational establishments within Bracknell Forest, Wokingham Borough and surrounding areas. This cascade system was tested recently. I gather there may have been an issue with one of the schools within Bracknell Forest were too busy to participate in the process. I have asked John Hourihan for further information. I do accept that the system should be reviewed and I have asked John to coordinate this.

I have considered at length the comments raised at Overview and Scrutiny on 22nd October and the feedback from the consultation with the various parish councils, as well as the findings of the follow up conditions survey, and the need to conduct a detailed RF and acoustic survey. I have reflected on our initial proposal to replace the sirens at Crowthorne, Sandhurst and Little Sandhurst, and to decommission the other seven sirens.

I have now come to the decision that the most appropriate way forward is to retain and maintain all community based sirens until the new hospital is completed and the secure perimeter fence is realigned in 2019. From that time all sirens will be decommissioned. However to ensure consistency with the other two high secure hospitals and to provide assurance to the Crowthorne community, I propose to install a new siren on the entrance building to the new hospital. This will of course require necessary planning permission by Bracknell Forest Council.

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss our plans further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Shrubbs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Shrubbs
Chief Executive
West London Mental Health NHS Trust