



Cyngor Gwledig LLANELLI Rural Council

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Clerk to the Council

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Fy nghyf: C/DJ/C17
My ref:

Eich cyfeirnod: CS/CH01/180406.1
Your ref:

Gofynnwch am:
Please ask for:

15 May 2006

Mr A Brace
Chief Executive
Carmarthenshire Local Health Board
Unit 5, Parc Dafen
Heol Cropin
Llanelli
SA14 8QW

Dear Alan

CONSULTATION ON THE REVIEW OF GENERAL SURGICAL SERVICES IN CARMARTHENSHIRE

I hope you are well!

I am writing in respect of the consultation document which the Council received from you a short while ago. We've now had an opportunity of discussing it and set out below is the Council's views and observations:

1. The Council cannot support any of the options presented in the report. Instead we wish to press for a fourth option, namely the full reinstatement of emergency surgical services at Prince Philip Hospital on a 24/7 basis. Despite not being able to support any of the report options, Members were, nevertheless, pleased to learn that Prince Philip was being considered for major capital investment, if ultimately the Local Health Board proceeds with the reconfiguration of surgical services.
2. The Council is not convinced with the arguments set out in the report because there are too many unanswered questions. The Council is disappointed that no sound business case has been put forward and more importantly nor has a risk assessment been included. It is impossible to make an informed decision without this vital information. Moreover, if emergency surgical services is ultimately switched to West Wales General Hospital, we believe this will seriously put at risk the lives of Llanelli people. We understand that



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at least 12 dire emergencies occur in the Llanelli area every year – the report is silent on how these emergencies would be dealt with, should you proceed with the recommendations.

3. If emergency and elective surgery is split between the hospitals, how will you provide for the possibility of medical cases ending up in surgical beds? Will there be safeguards put in place to ensure that enough beds are available? Furthermore, what effect will delayed transfer of care have on the proposed reconfiguration?
4. How will you cater for complications arising from elective surgery and providing for inpatients who may require emergency surgery at Prince Philip?
5. The Council is concerned for patient safety. Earlier mention was made about dire emergency cases. In the event of patients having to be transferred to Glangwili, how quickly could this be achieved without jeopardising the health of the patient(s) and what additional burden will this place on the local ambulance service, which is already overstretched?
6. Prince Philip Hospital serves a population of 110,000 out of a total population of 175,000 for Carmarthenshire. The Llanelli area has some of the most deprived electoral wards in Wales, and yet under current proposals it is these areas that stand to lose out and receive the poorest access to emergency surgery. Given that Prince Philip serves the majority of the population of the county, and is located in an urban area where health demands are at their greatest, surely this must be a critical factor for retaining emergency surgery at the hospital?
7. Prince Philip has a MRI scanner and yet the West Wales General Hospital hasn't. The Council would also like to see Carmarthen people having first class services at Glangwili and we certainly wouldn't wish to jeopardise their health care needs in denying them a scanner, but given Prince Philip already has a scanner surely this must strengthen the case for full reinstatement of emergency surgery at Prince Philip hospital?
8. Mention is made in the report about "staff such as junior doctors will soon not be working the very long hours that they have in the past; this is good for patient safety as they will be less tired. However, these changes will have an effect on how health services are organised". The Council understands that the Royal College of Surgeons is writing to the Government about the European Union Working Time Directive because it is too restrictive. Will this ultimately have any bearing on the reconfiguration of services?
9. If Prince Philip is only permitted to perform elective surgery, how will this affect staffing levels at the hospital? If emergency surgery is moved to Carmarthen this will result in potential recruitment difficulties at Prince Philip. Staff may not find the hospital an attractive option to further their careers and preference would inevitably be given to Glangwili.

10. The Council understands that Carmarthenshire NHS Trust has a considerable financial deficit. What would happen in the future, if substantial savings have to be identified by the Trust. These savings would be taken from Prince Philip Hospital given its proposed elective only status. Glangwili would be safeguarded to a large extent because you can't cancel emergency surgery whereas you can cancel elective surgery. This would seriously undermine the future of the hospital.
11. Has the consultation exercise been extended to staff at both hospitals? It would be interesting to have their views included in the report.
12. If Prince Philip were to lose emergency surgery altogether, then it is only going to be a matter of time before other essential services are gradually withdrawn and consequently the Accident and Emergency service would be seriously undermined.
13. By reinstating emergency surgery at Prince Philip to a 24/7 basis, this would ease the burden and case load of neighbouring hospitals, particularly West Wales General Hospital in Carmarthen and Morriston and Singleton hospitals in Swansea.
14. The Council is firmly of the opinion that before any reconfiguration of general surgery in Carmarthenshire takes place, it would be wise to await the outcome of the review into 'Acute Health Service provision in Mid and West Wales'. The regional picture will inevitably affect the local picture, so it is in the best interest of all parties to defer any decision on general surgical services until the regional situation is resolved.

We hope these comments will help influence the consultation process and we would like to thank you for consulting with the Council.

Yours sincerely



Clerk to the Council