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Dear Residents,

An Open Letter on the Future of Local Hospital Services

The Independent Review of the NHS's Future Fit process is now underway.

Without doubt, Future Fit has been a flawed process over the past three years costing £millions. Irrespective of what the independent review concludes, no one should be in any doubt that the NHS is determined to press ahead with changes to how key local hospital services are delivered.

So now the dust is settling following the General Election and ahead of this next phase of Future Fit commencing, I thought it important that I set out very clearly what my position and the position of my administration is.

In an ideal world, I would prefer to see fully staffed Accident & Emergency Services in both Telford AND Shrewsbury. Who wouldn't? Telford is the fastest growing town in the Midlands. Shropshire is the largest inland county in England.

But if we cannot get to that ideal place of two highly effective A & Es, then my view is very clear. Telford, the Princess Royal Hospital, is the most logical place where full A & E services and the current comprehensive Women's & Children's Services should be centred.

It is a matter of public fact that is beyond dispute that the preferred option of the so-called NHS Future Fit review process, of Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group and the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust would result in the downgrading of the current level of A & E and Women's & Children's Services which are currently provided at the PRH. This fact was confirmed by the Hospital Trust's Chief Executive on BBC Radio Shropshire.

I'm very clear that such a proposal will not benefit the people of Telford & Wrekin and those in the surrounding areas of north and eastern Shropshire for whom the PRH is their local hospital.

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I'm equally clear that there is a very strong clinical, demographic, geographic and financial case for the retention of all the current Women's and Children's services at the PRH as well as for siting a new Emergency Centre there too.

But please don't take my word for that. When the local Future Fit process asked the NHS' own medical experts - the West Midlands Clinical Senate - to look at the proposals, one of the main observations from this team of regional experts was that:

"Telford and Wrekin have a younger population and more deprived population; this would favour the Emergency Centre at the PRH Telford site. However, this is mitigated by the elderly population in the Shrewsbury area where Emergency Care services will be required by the elderly patients. However, if robust community based services are in place this service could address some of this demand".

This observation doesn't appear to have been widely shared and certainly hasn't received much attention.

Perhaps it is an inconvenient truth for some people.

So the view of the NHS' regional experts is that there could be improved community-based services in place across Shropshire that could better meet the real needs of its population and reduce the need for so many admissions to hospital - which don't depend or require the downgrading of key services at PRH.

Why hasn't Future Fit prioritised looking at this over the past 3 years rather than being fixated with just looking at two hospital sites?

I know the view can also be put forward that Shrewsbury is the better location for that relatively small number of people who live in Mid-Powys. Well isn't there a strong argument for the Welsh Government to step up to the plate and take greater direct responsibility for the health and care of their population? I feel the argument for them to look into and invest further in health services for their remote and isolated communities is compelling. Has this even been looked at?

I believe, in the 21st century, people deserve better health services, whether that be in the community or in hospital.

Local people deserve investment in the right solutions that will care for, protect, support and enhance their communities. It is time for some new thinking that doesn't pitch hospital versus hospital or community against community.

It is time for those local NHS decision-makers to rip up the tired old one-dimensional thinking and now move with pace and purpose to design solutions that meet the specific needs of all our different communities.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Shaun Davies
Leader of the Council