

Henley Town Council – Townlands Steering Group Report for 2019-2020

1. Parking

The TSG have been continually pressurising NHS Property Services since 2018 to resolve the significant problems for patients, families, staff and residents caused by the inadequacy and incompetence of the parking operator Smart Parking. The problems included technical failures, usability, impenetrable appeals procedures, over aggressive debt recovery, breaches of Planning law, breaches of legislation for notices, excessive charges and others.

In particular the contract NHS PS issues to Smart Parking meant that these unacceptable practices worked in favour of the operator providing perverse incentives to operate a scheme that was clearly unfair and unreasonable as all the penalty charges we received by the operator.

Eventually NHS PS agreed that the situation was unacceptable, and informed us that a new nationwide contract was about to be issued, and that the contract with Smart Parking would be terminated.

The TSG has always taken the view that engaging with NHS organisations is the best way to maintain and improve services. We continued to work with the various stakeholders to ensure a permanent solution to parking management at Townlands that safeguards the needs of patients and residents.

We continued to meet with NHS PS to discuss how the new scheme would operate. Senior NHS PS managers attended a public meeting of the TSG in Nov 2019 to announce how the scheme would work and listen to remaining concerns and explain the operation. The new scheme became operational in Dec 2019 and appears to be operating well. The TSG will meet with NHS PS shortly to review the scheme.

2. Townlands Hospital

The demise of the TSRG means that the TSG now works directly with the CCG to monitor the services and all aspects of the site. 6 monthly updates are being received. Despite the earlier concerns when the beds were closed, the RACU is now operating well and is very popular with patients and staff.

There remain significant issues with access to Adult Social Services provided by Oxon County Council. The lack of timely access to home care packages is concerning not only to patients but also to the TSG and to Gps. This remains a problem nationally arising from austerity and the severe cuts to all County Councils. The only long term solution will arise when central government finally grasp the nettle of social care for the elderly.

3. Townlands Residences

Amber solutions (the Townlands developer) recently invited the TSG and others to see the nearly completed restoration of the old workhouse and new key worker housing. The whole site is extraordinarily impressive. Amber wish to use this as an exemplar to enable them to gain further similar contracts. This has enabled them to improve the original plans providing (for example) underground parking improving the green nature of the site by hiding the car park.

Prices for the 2 bed flats in the old workhouse start at about £600k. Still expensive and unaffordable for many but not as high as originally feared.

4. Sue Ryder

In Aug 2018 the TSG held a public meeting when Sue Ryder indicated the Joyce Grove Hospice in Nettlebed would close. They explained their plan for a new single location in South Oxon which would host the beds (they had identified a need for 8), as well as the very important additional services: the Day Service, Helpline and admin centre for their expanding Hospice at Home services.

Subsequent repeated enquiries of Sue Ryder resulted in the same response that the TSG would be informed before a decision became final and its announcement. In spring 2019 the number of beds at Joyce Grove was reduced to 6. When asked Sue Ryder denied that this would reduce the financial and operational viability of the service.

Sadly in Jan 2020 Sue Ryder announced that they were not able to deliver on their original plans, and that the Hospice would close at the end of March 2020. Those needing beds would need to access the in patient units at Duchess of Kent in Reading, or Sobell House in Oxford.

Since then the TSG have been in repeated contact with Sue Ryder (the provider of the service), the Oxon CCG (as the commissioner of End of Life services) and Oxon County Council as the body responsible for Public health leadership and scrutiny of health and social care provision on Oxon.

Sue Ryder have declined to provide any further information when asked, They have also said they are unable to meet before the end of March when the hospice is to close.

Oxon County Council Health Over Scrutiny Committee (HOSC):

TSG members attended the HOSC meeting on 6 Feb and made strong representation regarding the community concerns on the provision of End of Life/Palliative care after March 31st. The response was very disappointing with the chair incorrectly saying that only 2 Oxon residents would be affected, and no consultation was necessary. This is the same position as adopted by the MP when approached. Instead a very weak proposal to consider the matter in the summer was made. Given the Sue Ryder assessment of a need of 8 beds, and an average stay of 3 weeks, 138 patients and families would be affected each year.

CCG:

TSG members attended the CCG board meeting on 26 Jan and made strong representations regarding the closure. The CCG were helpful and open in their response understanding the concerns expressed and provided a telconf meeting on 7 Feb which provided useful information, including the fact the CCG was attempting to design and implement a plan to provide continuity after March 31st.

It was agreed that the CCG and TSG would stay in contact and a meeting would take place once the nature of the re-provision was clearer.

A subsequent meeting took place on 12 March between Diane Hedges (deputy CEO, and acting CEO CCG), Alison Seren (CCG End of Life Lead), and Sue Boyce and Ally Green who are senior CCG communication managers. Key facts:

- The CCG are looking at a central location to re-provide *all the existing Joyce Grove services* (except the beds which will cease at the end of March). This was close to being signed. Possibly before March 31st.

- This would be located in SE Oxon.
- The stakeholders (OSJ, RBH, CC, OCCG and SR) are designing a partial replacement service for the JG beds. This will not be colocated with the reprovision of the other services.
- The CCG noted the point that closing beds in middle of a major international health crisis may be unwise. They agreed to make this point to Sue Ryder.
- The CCG reluctantly accepted our concerns that the lack of information was causing undue anxiety, and that it was an urgent need to fill the vacuum. The CCG thought that they had supplied some of the evidence base to justify the plans for future care. They agreed to provide
 - need for beds in South Oxon
 - satisfaction of Hospice at Home care
 - number of patients JG unable to accept for capacity reasons
 - information on Duchess of Kent bed usage
- The CCG also agreed to work with the TSG over the next week to ensure that that information on the service planning was shared as far as possible.

Cllr Ian Reissmann
Chair Townlands Steering Group