

Since the last meeting the Police and Crime Panel met on 5th October and rejected the proposed merger proposal with Dorset. This will not take place.

Suicide remains a key issue for Northern Devon, with mental health being the subject of a networking event organised by DCC at a networking event held at Umberleigh on 12th October. With Devon having an elevated suicide risk with 115 suicides officially recorded in 2016 - and Northern Devon having a regrettable statistical peak I have taken the opportunity to write to the recently appointed Minister responsible for addressing suicides (Jackie Doyle-Price MP) to request a face to face meeting. With suicide related to economic deprivation, isolation and farmers being particularly at risk there are many locally impacting issues to discuss.

The Holsworthy Community Involvement Group (HCIG) continues to meet on a fortnightly basis.

With regard to the reopening of the inpatient beds the situation remains unchanged from previous updates where I reported that the NDHT reported that medical recruitment was “extremely challenging” and the implementation plan for Holsworthy was both “challenging and difficult”. At the meeting on 16th October the NDHT reported “problematic implementation and off track against reopening timeline due to securing in-hours medical cover.” My personal view is that all the evidence I have knowledge of points to the beds remaining closed for the foreseeable future.

Notwithstanding this Councillor Barry Parsons and Mayor Jon Hutchins assert that this is not a true reflection of the position demonstrate that despite the negative national picture on staffing and the report given at the NDHT AGM. Holsworthy is unique in its location and needs and will “buck the trend”.

Barry Parsons has had additional meetings with “senior members of the CCG” and although he is unable to disclose the nature of the confidential information he possesses, he has assured the HCIG and briefed Parish Councils that there is a “bigger picture at a higher level” and the beds will reopen. The Mayor has previously issued two reopening dates (albeit the first one has slipped by 20 months) including, I am informed, of one at the end of this year. Barry has asked that the reopening of the beds is briefed in positive terms - he points out that it was said that his project of creating the Agri Centre would never happen and he made that project come to fruition, and the same will be true of the beds. He has knowledge of a Dutch health model which could be implemented in the Holsworthy area which could revolutionise care and cut costs. As he points out, Holsworthy is the only Hospital in the country where beds are to be reopened and the nation are looking at our pioneering approach to see how we have made this happen.

The questionnaire produced by the group is aiming to produce a bespoke solution to the Holsworthy area healthcare needs has received over 1,000 replies from the 20,000 potential respondents (6,500 homes) in the area. The replies are mainly from Holsworthy residents and although towards the lower end the group were able to

send out a flyer saying “a thousand thanks”. The replies are of a quantity which, after being evaluated, will give a statistically reliable cohort. The results are due to be released this month.

There will be a Joint Health Scrutiny Meeting held at Brynsworthy and a number of questions have been submitted which are appended for information. I welcome this joint approach by both District Councils in having all the right people in the same room at the same time to discuss health issues.