

## HAMPSHIRE CHRONICLE

# Letter from Westminster



**Winchester MP:  
Steve Brine**

WHEN I was first elected, more than seven years ago, I remember people predicting the imminent closure of the Royal Hampshire County Hospital.

Some of them (those speaking with a clinical understanding) had a point. The old trust was in

debt and the wider Hampshire health economy had no plan to transform services in a way that brought together hospital treatment with primary, community and social care to secure improved outcomes for patients.

There was also little scope to recognise that each area has different challenges; for-instance, we do really well on one year cancer survival rates but the demographics in this part of the country mean we could do better when it comes to stroke prevention.

The National Health Service reforms of 2010 swept away layers of expensive bureaucracy and formed local clinical commissioning groups while the creation of Hampshire Hospitals Foundation Trust - covering Winchester, Andover and Basingstoke - was a landmark moment for the acute sector.

The Hampshire STP (Sustainability and Transformation Partnership) builds on all of this and promises to inject long-term thinking into how the NHS delivers the care an ageing population - that is living longer, often with comorbidities - actually needs.

It would fill a hundred columns to cover it all, and much of it is uncontroversial, but it's changes to the hospital services we need when we're acutely unwell - and of course obstetrics - that will create the headlines.

I have yet to meet a constituent who doesn't want to be taken to the right place, to receive the most appropriate treatment, should they suffer a stroke or heart attack for-instance. The position today is that an ambulance called for the former would blue-light you to Winchester while the latter would see you taken to the cardiac specialists in Basingstoke.

A&E in Winchester today is something of an oxymoron. If you have an 'accident' you'd probably take yourself into the Romsey Road hospital. If you're an 'emergency', the truth is you'd know little about it. South Central Ambulance would triage you to the right place. The distinction is, bluntly, between whether you walk in or you're carried in.

This Autumn will finally see recommendations as to the future configuration of local hospital services. For the reasons I've outlined above, we need to future proof the NHS in this part of Hampshire so it can be there when we need it.

As an experienced constituency MP, I know we must keep cool heads and listen to what the clinicians are saying but also to understand what the Royal Hampshire County Hospital actually does right now. Above all, this is too important for short-term party politics so let's leave that at the door. As someone once said, Winchester deserves better.

Steve Brine,  
MP for Winchester and Chandler's  
Ford

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