

## HEALTHCARE IN DOVER

*A talk by Lynne Selman & Sue Brown reported by Lorraine Sencicle*

Our health, its treatment and the way we receive it is one subject that understandably arouses strong feelings. It was therefore with great interest that we awaited the presentation by Lynne Selman and Sue Brown of our Primary Care Trust (PCT).

Lynne first described our Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT, its work and aims. It must engage with us to improve our health, fitness and wellbeing. It has to commission or directly provide appropriate quality services within its budget (it is currently financially stable). It does not run hospitals but buys from them some of the services we need.

What is the background against which the PCT has to decide how best to serve our health needs? Nationally the changes in health technology and medicine seem to be driving hospitals to centralise into specialisations. Greater patient expectations of outcomes would also push things in this direction. Locally we are an ageing population with, compared to the national average, more cancer deaths, obesity, mental health needs, child poverty and a greater number of accidents.

Apart from involving local organisations such as Dover District Council it looks to involve us in assessing priorities and learning what we consider important. This was a vital part of the message given throughout the meeting. PCT plans include better primary care, lower technical care close to our homes, and less time spent in hospital. Areas for investment include improvement in areas of most need, more outpatient facilities locally and end of life care at home.

In the summer of 2006 the PCT consulted local people in a review of health and social care services. Some of the major concerns were the need for adequate transport, lack of parking at hospitals, location of services and strong support for the preservation of Buckland Hospital. The PCT believes that it is starting to make progress in implementing changes based upon consultation and they are now delivering increased health care for older people.

Questions followed and can be broadly divided into the following categories:-

### *Dealing with complaints and problems:*

It is clear that if we have bad experiences or are dissatisfied we should contact the PCT and make our concerns known. If we don't then we have only ourselves to blame if nothing is done. Following a question one member was asked to join the patient's forum.

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Email [communications@cantpct.nhs.uk](mailto:communications@cantpct.nhs.uk)

### *Transport:*

There is wide concern about the need to travel to Ashford, Canterbury or Thanet for treatment, the lack of public transport and inadequate and expensive parking facilities. The PCT is working on improving public transport but it requires the co-operation of other public bodies to produce results. Going green and generating less carbon dioxide does not even get a mention. 3 out of 10 on this one!

### *Buckland Hospital:*

Nadeem Aziz told us earlier of plans for Dover to become a world-class town, but no hospital! It seems to me that Dover people and the PCT are like the deaf talking to each other, neither comprehends what the other is saying. The PCT tells us Buckland is not suitable as a hospital building and it is seeking to provide us with an up-to-date alternative. However, that alternative will not be a hospital. Dover people want their hospital and resent travelling long distances either for treatment or to visit patients. If you do not have a car or are poor, and the statistics emphasise local poverty, then distance certainly does not lend enchantment. The matter was further heightened when Lorraine Sencicle asked that the statistics detailing a decline in outpatient visits to Buckland be explained in the light of the PCT's attitude to the

hospital's future and plans for more local outpatient treatment. There was no clear answer and it is to be hoped the PCT will provide a full explanation. Judging by what was said Buckland's chances of survival look slim indeed.

Many of us understand the need for specialist treatment centres. We have good experience of the treatment we receive from NHS. Nevertheless, we are rightly suspicious of plans handed down to us that take away the services we are used to without any proven replacements. Most of us resent the travelling involved, both time and cost, brought about by the current centralisation. Is it too much to ask for a policy of the maximum treatment provided at local level, with statistics and information to prove that the policy is working? Why not a local hospital for post-operative care?

## *December Meeting*

### **THE CHRISTMAS FEAST 2007**

*Reported by Alan Lee*

The feast was held, as is now the usual practice, in the Dover College refectory with our Chairman Derek Leach acting as the Master of Ceremonies.

The chefs and college staff once again arranged for a most sumptuous buffet with the organisation first rate. Jeremy and Shelia Cope, Jack Woolford, Denise Lee and Ken Tranter the raffle ticket sellers ensured by their gentle persuasion that the sum of £234 was raised.

The entertainment was provided by Elspeth Robertson, the Marlow Young Musician of the Year, accompanied by

Kate, Pandora and Marion. Incidentally, Kate had travelled down from Edinburgh University that day and only arrived late in the afternoon.

The ensemble started off with the *Waltz of the Flowers* from the *Nutcracker* by Tchaikovsky followed by the selection of three dances from Bach's *Orchestral Suite No. 2*. The music then changed dramatically with Elspeth and her mother Marian playing two jazz duets by Brian Bonsor. This led on to a solo by Elspeth playing some ragtime. Both pieces were written by Scott Joplin, *Pine Apple Rag* published in 1908