

MEDIA RELEASE

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Tilbury residents quiz health team



The future of health provision in Tilbury was discussed at a public meeting in the town on Tuesday (20 October) evening.

Over 50 local people had a chance to quiz and listen to health and council chiefs talk about the town's "dreadful" GP problems and potential solutions.

Opening the meeting, Tilbury councillor Lynn Worrall, said: "Thurrock as a whole and Tilbury in particular has a major shortage of GPs and that is having an effect on our health.

"As far as I am concerned, we are here tonight to hear from NHS England what they are going to do about this situation and how quickly they are going to do it."

She explained: "In June, senior members of NHS England reported to councillors on challenges in the Tilbury area and admitted that Thurrock had the lowest ratio of GPs to patients and that the area must be targeted to develop primary care and make it more attractive, with better infrastructure and GP schemes.

The meeting heard from NHS England's Sara Lingard and Alison Cowie that their organisation was working closely with local Thurrock health teams trying to deal with the immediate crisis - by ensuring doctors were covering practices which had ceased recently - as well as trying to find a permanent solution to the issue.

They also explained how Tilbury would benefit from a new scheme called EPIC (Essex Primary Care Inter-Professional Centre) Workforce Development, which aims to support and attract more doctors and nurses to Essex and to enhance the skills of the wider primary care workforce.

Dr V Raja, a Thurrock GP and member of NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group talked of the importance of patients having their say in the future of health services for Thurrock adding that Thurrock as a whole was one of the most "under-doctored" places in the country and Tilbury was suffering most.

Ian Wake, Thurrock Council's Director of Public Health, gave a presentation which highlighted the GP crisis in Tilbury describing the current situation as "dreadful", but added he, Thurrock Council, and NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group were working to create a new top-quality health facility in the town.

Members of the audience questioned the NHS England representatives about issues they had faced with the health service in Tilbury, and several said complaints against GPs could lead to the threat of being removed from a practice's list, while others complained of being unable to receive proper treatment or access to preventative procedures in the town. Details were taken and will be followed up.

Closing the meeting, Cllr Worrall asked the audience to put forward things they would like to see in any new health centre and to make sure they continued to engage with those trying to improve the situation.

Afterwards, she said: "I will keep up the pressure on the health authorities. The service we get in Tilbury at the moment is just not good enough by a long chalk. It might take some time to get things absolutely right, but it must start improving very quickly indeed. The people of Tilbury deserve no less, and the people of Tilbury will not put up with less."

Notes

High res photographs available

Among the statistics in Ian Wake's presentation – which he said were based on figures available in March this year – were

If death rates in Tilbury were the same as England then 43 fewer people would die before the aged of 75; 16 fewer people would die of a heart attack or stroke before the age of 75; 13 fewer people would die of cancer before the age of 75; and a Tilbury baby is predicted to die ten years before an Orsett baby.

In England (on average) a GP is responsible for 1,321 patients; Thurrock's average is 2,071 (750 more); and practices in Tilbury range from 2,338 (1,017 more) and 6,962 (5,641 more than the England average).