MEDIA RELEASE

Immediate release: 23 March 2016

Six months after Tilbury’s GP-shortage issues were laid out, council and health chiefs were back in the town on Tuesday (22 March) evening detailing the work that has been done since.

The public meeting held at the Tilbury Community Association in Civic Square was chaired by local councillor Lynn Worrall, and heard from Mandy Ansell, the acting accountable officer for Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and also speaking on behalf of NHS England who were not present; Ian Wake, Thurrock Council’s Director of Public Health; and Kim James, Chief Operating Officer of Healthwatch Thurrock.

Cllr Worrall said afterwards: “We have to get the message out there that things are already improving, that they will improve further quite quickly and that they will be top class in 2019 when the new Integrated Healthy Living Centre opens.”

The meeting heard that the centre – backed by the council’s cabinet earlier in March – would host a range of health specialities as well as GPs to create a 21st century surgery.

These would include such things as modern GP surgery facilities, hospital outpatient clinics, proactive care for people with long-term needs, improved social and mental wellbeing, and helping tackle the root causes of bad health.

It would have highly-trained nurse practitioners, teams of doctors – some with specialisms - pharmacists, and even possibly paramedics.

Mr Wake explained that doctors across the country were crying out for facilities like this and, quoting from the film Field of Dreams, “if we build it, they will come”, adding that the whole medical team would reduce both the need for more GPs, although more were still needed, and cut the pressures on hospitals and especially A&E.

And Mandy Ansell added that the CCG and council, working together, were talking with both Basildon Hospital and modern GP groups so most of the
services planned for the new centre would already be available in Tilbury before it opened.

Cllr Worrall said: “I know Tilbury people are sceptical, they’ve heard the promises before then seen nothing happen and that is why we must all keep up the pressure.

“But this time I am confident. I have seen the work the health team at the council and at the CCG have been putting in, the partnership working and the determination to get this done.

“Equally they are all agreed this must be done with the people of Tilbury and not to them.

“But the Healthy Living Centre is going to come. It will be a reality and we must make sure we take advantage of that reality and the improvements we will see over the coming months.”

Dr Anand Deshpande, chair of NHS Thurrock CCG, who was also at the meeting, said: “We listened and we’ve been able to share some successes that addressed the challenges Tilbury residents were facing.

“These include opening new health hubs to improve access to GPs and nurses and we’re forging ahead with our public consultation For Thurrock in Thurrock which will see us seek to transform health and care in Thurrock with care, closer to, or at home, provided in an integrated way.

“We continuously look to our local residents and patients to advise us on what’s important to them, to help us ensure that we can build better healthcare for everyone in our local communities. We remain keen to ensure that Tilbury people are at the heart of our commissioning.”

And Kim James added: “Tuesday evening showed the way forward for both Tilbury people and all Thurrock communities to be involved in the future of their care, both within health and in social care.

“Healthwatch Thurrock has worked hard over the last six weeks to highlight the For Thurrock in Thurrock vision to ensure everyone is involved every step of the way in the future.

“As an Independent Organisation representing the people of Thurrock, we are pleased that we have been able to work alongside Thurrock CCG in this important work.”

ENDS

Notes to editors
Photographs available

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