

THE TOLLGATE PRACTICE

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19th FEBRUARY AT 1.00 PM

ATTENDEES

Surgery/ NHS Staff: Dr K Abey Bandara (KA) Dr E Bopitiya (EB) Lisa Maddox (LM) Lisa Sullivan (LS) Anthony West (AW) Michael Wigg (MW)

Patient Members: Chairman -David Mills (DM) Secretary - Michael Vass (MV) Christopher Dowsett (CD) Pamela Hurcomb (PH) Karen Drake (KD) Peter Walker (PW) Rosemary James (RJ) Susan Spice (SS)

- 1. Welcome.** DM welcomed everyone to the meeting including in particular the return of Lisa Maddox (Supporting the Tollgate Practice) and Anthony West & Michael Wigg from the ICB (Integrated Care Board). Lisa Sullivan (Advanced Nurse Practitioner) from the surgery also attended the meeting.
- 2. Apologies.** MV reported that apologies had been received from Angela Young, Lorraine Feakes, Jane Philips and Keith Tucker. Keith, who was a founder member of the Tollgate PPG, also indicated that due to age and health, he would be resigning from the committee. He was thanked for his service.
- 3. Minutes of the last meeting** held on the 6th November 2024 were unanimously approved.
- 4. Matters Arising.** No issues not covered by the agenda
- 5. Recent Developments.**
 - a) Resignations.** The committee were aware from MV's agenda note that Melanie Williams (Deputy Practice Manager) and Sarah Spooner (Reception Supervisor) had recently left the practice. Earlier this week the surgery had also announced that the partners (KA and EB) were withdrawing from the practice and had handed back their contract to the Integrated Care Board (ICB)
 - b) Future Plans.** Anthony West from the ICB was asked to outline the action being taken to protect the future of the surgery and its patients – these plans and the wide-ranging discussions that followed are summarised under a number of headings below.
- 6. Caretaker Service Provider** AW told the meeting that immediate action was being taken to identify and appoint a "caretaker provider" (probably another local practice) who would take responsibility for the Tollgate practice from the 12th March. They would be given a one/two-year General Medical Services (GMS) contract to run the service whilst a permanent provider was identified. The ability of the caretaker provider to fully support the Tollgate Practice during this interim stage would be the key criteria in the appointment process and their ongoing performance would be closely monitored by the ICB.
- 7. Handover / Transfer Arrangements** Several members asked questions about the transfer of the practice. As far as possible the transfer of the practice will be seamless with patients receiving the same level of care they currently enjoy at the Tollgate surgery. In the long term the level of staffing will be the responsibility of the "provider"

but current staff are likely to be retained and they will receive the normal level of protection from dismissal and changes to working conditions when similar businesses are sold or ownership transferred. The high levels of staff turnover and the lack of recruitment remained a major concern of the committee and although the difficulties of achieving a continuity of treatment by the same practitioner was recognised it was nevertheless very important to most patients. The shortage of doctors and qualified medical staff was also discussed as was the pressure being placed on surgeries, other services and infrastructure by the level of new house building taking place in Colchester and surrounding districts.

- 8. PPG Role in the Transfer** AW thanked the PPG for a constructive meeting and promised to liaise with DM & MV to ensure that it was kept abreast with developments and that arrangements would be made for the PPG to meet with the interim provider as soon as appropriate (probably 16th April at the AGM). Given the concerns about staffing levels and turnover – including reception - he would also be making arrangements for someone from the ICB Training Hub to make a presentation to the committee on these issues in the near future. In advance of the meeting with the “new provider/ICB” the committee members were invited to feed questions and topics for discussion via MV who would summarise a list. This would result in a more productive meeting and “hopefully” enable them to have the answers to hand!
- 9. Other Matters** During the course of the discussion with the ICB staff a number of other issues were raised. KD & RJ commented on the difficulties older patients encountered dealing with the digital age including using the NHS App and responding to telephone and visual internet appointments. AW said that face to face appointments were still the norm and that these could still be booked in person or by telephone. On a positive note PH told the meeting that following a stay in hospital her husband had been discharged into a “virtual ward” at home – this was working really well with the doctor making daily contact.
- 10. Mental Health Provision** PW restated his concerns about the lack of support available and it was agreed this would remain on the agenda for discussion with the new interim provider.
- 11. AOB** It was agreed that the rest of the agenda be held over for a future meeting. DM confirmed that there were no other urgent matters that members wished to raise.
- 12. Thanks to Drs. Abeyundara & Bopitiya** The chairman, secretary and all the committee joined in a vote of thanks to the partners as they relinquish their contract and wished them well for the future. KA & EB then expressed their thanks to the PPG for its help during their ownership of the practice.
- 13. Next Meeting.** Will be held on Wednesday 16th April 2025 at 1.00pm at the surgery.

The meeting closed at 2.05pm.