

THE TOLLGATE PRACTICE

PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16th APRIL 2025 AT 1.00 PM

ATTENDEES

Surgery/ NHS Staff: Nicky Young (NY), Anthony West (AW)

Patient Members: Chairman -David Mills (DM) Secretary - Michael Vass (MV) Christopher Dowsett (CD) Pamela Hurcomb (PH) Karen Drake (KD) Peter Walker (PW) Lorraine Feakes (LF) Wayne Tearle (WT)

- 1. Welcome.** DM welcomed everyone to the meeting including in particular Nicky Young who, following the appointment of the Abbey Field Medical Centre (AFMC) as the new care provider for Tollgate, becomes our Practice Manager; Anthony West from the ICB (Integrated Care Board) and Wayne Tearle joining as a new patient member of the PPG.
- 2. Apologies.** MV reported that apologies had been received from Angela Young, Rosemary James and Susan Spice.
- 3. Minutes of the last meeting** held on the 19th February 2025 were approved subject to the removal of the words “lack of” from Item 10 regarding Mental Health Provision.
- 4. Matters Arising.** PW suggested that the meeting might have been more critical of the recent service being provided by the surgery if the retiring partners had not been present at the meeting. This was agreed although MV pointed out the previous meetings and minutes had made clear the Groups concerns about problems at the surgery.
- 5. Recent Developments.**
 - a) AFMC/Nicky Young** NY introduced herself and told the meeting that she had worked at the AFMC for some fifteen years having previously been employed by BT. She then outlined some of the problems facing the new providers and the invaluable help being provided by the ICB. It was clear that it would take some time to fully resolve all the issues but that said that AFMC had experience of taking control of other practices and was confident that gradual improvements would be noticed.
 - b) Management** The intention would be to manage Tollgate in an integrated way with the rest of the AFMC surgeries. Separate teams were in place for all practice activities. To ensure a good team spirit and consistent levels of service nearly all staff - from doctors down - work across at least two sites. Currently a major recruitment process was in hand covering in some instances positions that had become vacant as a result of staff deciding to leave the practice following the change of provider. Positive news was that a new doctor (Dr.Khan) was already in place and other appointments were in the pipeline. CD noted that the surgery website was in need of revision and requested that, in the light of all the changes, it be updated.
 - c) Appointments** A new “triage” appointment system” (currently in place within the AFMC group) will be introduced into the Tollgate surgery in May. This involves submitting a written request via the internet (or phone with the help of reception) to enable appointments to be prioritised and if appropriate alternative assistance

offered. NY promised that all patients would be informed of the new procedures before they were implemented.

- d) **Feedback** In the course of a general discussion on NY's presentation several members provided feedback based on personal experience. KD was concerned that a warning about the use of a particular antibiotic had been missed or ignored; PH and LF raised the problems of delays in receiving consultants' letters and obtaining timely appointments - both on the phone and internet. WT informed the meeting of the many complaints he had been receiving about the surgery (relating in fairness to the old management) in his capacity as a Stanway Parish Councillor. He also explained that he had made a formal complaint to the ICB and had written to the two local MP's who cover Stanway. In response NY said that she was looking at options to check and if required update patient records. She also acknowledged that a backlog of consultant letters had occurred and asked for some overall patience as it will take time to get all the new staff fully trained and working efficiently.
 - e) **Future Stability** CD expressed his concern about the stability of the surgery given the numerous changes that have occurred over the last two years. AW explained that AFMC had only been appointed as the provider after a rigorous examination of their proposal and NY said that she had a strong team supporting her at AFMC and that, although not a promise, she had no plans to leave the practice. When questioned why it had taken the ICB so long to take action to secure the future of the practice AW explained that they had been monitoring events for some eighteen months but taking action to withdraw a GP contract was a high bar to reach. In conclusion NY also explained that all practices needed to be financially viable in order to be able to provide a reliable service for patients and stressed the importance of patients looking after their own health including making use of services outside of general practice. In this regard AW commented on a new initiative that is being rolled out within local PCN's (Patient Care Networks) bringing together integrated social, mental and physical care aimed at improving patient care as well as easing the pressure on hospitals and the NHS generally.
6. **Mental Health Provision** PW confirmed his special interest in the surgery's mental health services. NY explained that whilst there was a degree of mental health support within the practice there was more available externally and that she felt that the surgery had not been making best use of these external resources – including for example the "Mind" charity. Plans were in hand to ensure that new reception staff were trained to use these resources and in a crisis situation alert a doctor who could make a speedy decision on the best way forward for the patient.
7. **AOB** None
8. **Annual General Meeting**
- a) The Chair and Secretary's report for the year was noted together with the attendance record.
 - b) Election of Officers - David Mills and Michael Vass were unanimously re-elected as Chair and Secretary respectively.
9. **Date of Next Meeting** – 16th July 2025

The meeting closed at 2.25pm