Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Milford Haven Town Council

held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Milford Haven

on Tuesday, 10th July, 2018 at 7:00 pm

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PRESENT

The Mayor (Councillor R. D. Gray)

The Deputy Mayor (Councillor T. J. Davies)

Councillors: A. E. Byrne Miss K. Gray

A. H. Miles Mrs. T. Olin

C. A. Sharp D. R. Sinnett

Mrs. L. E. Turner R. Williams

G. Woodham MBA (Open) LL.B (Hons)

Youth

Representatives: Miss A. Coaker Miss B. Roberts

52. APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Coe, W. D. Elliott BA QTS,

E. R. Harries, M. P. Rickard, Mrs. Y. G. Southwell and Mrs. C. T. Williams.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

Councillor D. R. Sinnett declared a personal and prejudicial interest as his wife is employed by Hywel Dda University Health Board.

He has received dispensation from the Standards Committee at the Pembrokeshire County Council to speak but not vote on this matter.

54. TO CONSIDER THIS COUNCIL’S RESPONSE TO THE HYWEL DDA UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD – *OUR BIG NHS CHANGE* - CONSULTATION:

Members discussed their response to this consultation and expressed concerns with regard to the proposed downgrading of Withybush Hospital in Haverfordwest.

A Member said that it is important for the people of the town to know that the Town Council is taking this matter seriously. Whilst the Member had been advocating that every individual should fill in the questionnaire, when he embarked upon completion of the online questionnaire himself earlier that day he found this to be a complicated and cumbersome process.

The Member suggested that, as an alternative to completing the questionnaire, Councillors and Youth Representatives could discuss the key points and compose a letter to the Hywel Dda University Health Board.

RESOLVED THAT a letter in response to the Hywel

Dda University Health Board – *Our Big NHS Change*

*Consultation* - be written.

After a discussion it was RESOLVED THAT the letter should include the following:

(i) Pembrokeshire has a refinery, petrochemical storage facilities, a gas fired power station, two LNG storage plants, two Irish ferry installations, a tank firing range *and* a thriving tourist industry. To lose our A&E Department under the proposals as they stand would put many thousands at risk with unthinkable consequences and the Health Board could be accused of failing in its duty of care to the people of Pembrokeshire.

(ii) Councillors were disappointed to learn that there appeared to be minimal engagement with key partners (such as GPs and local authorities) not only in Milford Haven but also around the County before the consultation questionnaire was delivered. This lack of consultation does not bode well for the integrated and seamless new world that we are supposed to be entering.

(iii) We are already experiencing myriad problems with Primary Care in Pembrokeshire. The consultation document focuses on what happens mainly in Secondary Care settings and whilst it may reference health care services in the Community there appears to be no meaningful proposals to tackle the crisis that exists right now in Primary Care. People struggle to secure an appointment with their GP and they are as a result visiting the overloaded Casualty Department at Withybush Hospital unnecessarily, causing considerable extra strain on the resources.

(iv) This Council considers that Hywel Dda University Health Board should seek to improve Community and Primary Care services first before considering any reconfiguration of Secondary Care as there is a slow progress in integrating Health and Social Care at County Council and Health Board levels in order to reduce bed blocking. We are aware that there are a number of patients in Withybush who do not *need* to be there and who would be cared for in the community if the appropriate services were available. Unless Primary Care and Social Care problems are addressed any new Secondary Care developments will fail to address the immediate problems facing patient access to GMS services and domiciliary care in the community.

(v) Milford Haven is, according to the national index of deprivation, the most deprived area in Pembrokeshire and many people already struggle to pay to travel to Withybush. Although some people can be reimbursed, some cannot afford the initial outlay. Those people without their own mode of transport must also rely on an intermittent bus and rail service. The road infrastructure is a problem and Councillors spoke about how both they and others they knew had been delayed for long periods in traffic from Haverfordwest to Carmarthen because of accidents and other incidents.

(vi) The Milford Haven Town Council has two Youth Representatives. One of the Youth Representatives spoke of young people’s unease at the impact the downgrading of Withybush would have on the lives of the young people they represent and the human rights of children. The Hywel Dda consultation was disseminated and discussed in Milford Haven School. Young people had the choice to pick one issue out of ten on a ballot paper with one of those issues being the future of Withybush Hospital. 387 young people participated with the future of Withybush being their main concern.

(vii) Councillors commented on the way that the consultation questionnaire was slanted, which could deter the public from completing the form, and therefore not fairly reflecting the strength of feeling against these proposals.

A Member paid tribute to the hospital campaigners who for many years have undertaken a huge amount of work to try and keep the services open at Withybush.

The Member said that the petition that was launched recently and delivered to the Senedd had 40,000 signatories. However, only 2,500 people across the 3 counties of the Hywel Dda area have responded to this consultation as of today. There was only 48 hours left for people to respond to this important consultation.

IT WAS FURTHER RESOLVED THAT a Facebook

post be composed urging people to respond to

the consultation.

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