

Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

13 March 2025

Member's Item: Strood Healthy Living Centre and Primary Care Provision

Report from: Lee-Anne Farach, Director of People and Deputy Chief Executive

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Summary

This report sets out a response to a Member's item raised by Councillor Field (and supported by Councillor Van Dyke), in relation to primary care services in Strood.

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Committee is asked to note the comments from the Integrated Care Board in response to the Member's item.

2. Budget and policy framework

2.1. Under Medway Constitution Overview and Scrutiny rules (Chapter 4, Part 5, Paragraph 9.2) Councillor Field has requested that an item on this matter is included on the agenda for this meeting.

3. The issue

3.1. The Councillor Field (supported by Councillor Van Dyke) has requested that an item be placed on the agenda in relation to the following:

3.2. "We wish to raise an urgent matter regarding the long-promised Healthy Living Centre for Strood and the critical situation facing primary care services in the area.

3.3. It was previously understood that funding in the region of **£6 million** had been **protected by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)** to support the development of a **Healthy Living Centre in Strood**. This investment was intended to provide much-needed health and wellbeing services in a

community that continues to face **significant health inequalities and high levels of deprivation**.

- 3.4. Currently, **Strood remains the only town in Medway without a Healthy Living Centre**. This is deeply concerning given the **poor health indicators** in the area and the increasing demand for accessible, integrated health services. The need for such a centre is now more urgent than ever.
- 3.5. Adding to this issue is the situation at **Gun Lane Surgery and Pharmacy**, where the leases are due to expire next year. These facilities are **in a poor state of repair**, making them unsuitable for patients and staff alike. Without a clear plan for relocation or improvement, access to primary care in Strood will only worsen.
- 3.6. Given the above, we request that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) provide clear and transparent answers to the following questions:
 1. **What has happened to the £6 million that was protected for the Strood Healthy Living Centre?**
 2. **Has this funding been returned to the government? If so, why?**
 3. **What plans are in place to ensure that Strood will get a Healthy Living Centre, especially with leases expiring in 2026?**
 4. **What steps are being taken to improve pharmacy provision in Strood, ensuring local residents have reliable access to essential medications and advice?**
- 3.7. The people of Strood deserve clarity, accountability, and action. The delay in delivering a Healthy Living Centre has already had a negative impact on local healthcare services. The ICB must now set out a clear and immediate plan to resolve this situation before vital services are lost.
- 3.8. We look forward to the ICB's response and expect firm commitments to address these issues without further delay".
- 3.9. The Committee can use any of its powers in dealing with this Member's item, including making recommendations to officers, the Cabinet or the ICB.
4. Response from NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board
 - 4.1. **What has happened to the £6 million that was protected for the Strood Healthy Living Centre?**
 - 4.1.1. In 2017 an application for capital funding was made by the former Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for the development of two healthy living centres in Chatham and Strood. A total of £14.5m was provisionally allocated (£8.5m for Chatham and £6m for the Strood scheme) subject to the necessary planning, development and business case approvals requirements.

4.1.2. Unfortunately, the CCG subsequently delayed further progressing these proposals for reasons unknown. The funding had a limited time scale for use (2024). Given the increase in costs over the years since the funding was secured, it was agreed in late 2023 by NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board and NHS England to pool the funding to enable the potential development of the Chatham Healthy Living Centre, as plans for this development had been further progressed and could be delivered within the timescale. Medway Council were made aware of this at the time. The alternative option would have been to confirm to NHS England that neither scheme was viable with the funding available for each scheme and lose access to all of the funding that had been previously secured.

4.1.3. Approval of the full business case for Chatham Healthy Living Centre was given in 2024, and the development is expected to be completed by late summer this year.

4.2. Has this funding been returned to the Government? If so, why?

4.2.1. No, funding has not been returned to the Government as explained above.

4.3. What plans are in place to ensure that Strood will get a Healthy Living Centre, especially with leases expiring in 2026?

4.3.1. The ICB and Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership (HCP), in our discussions and response to Medway Council Local Plan consultation, have recognised that Strood (along with the Hoo Peninsula) does not currently have integrated community healthcare facilities, such as the Healthy Living Centres; and further detailed assessments will be required to define requirements in these localities, informed by the new Local Plan.

4.3.2. The ICB and HCP are awaiting the next release of information in line with the Council's Local Plan process to enable this assessment to be undertaken. The assessments will consider the impact on healthcare in the broadest sense and will include primary, community and acute, with considerations regarding the delivery of integrated neighbourhood models of care.

4.3.3. With regard to GP and pharmacy lease expiration, all healthcare providers are responsible for making their own arrangements and will take their own professional advice regarding renewal of a lease within the context of any premises assessments or plans for the area. Any application to relocate a GP practice or pharmacy would require an application to be made by the provider to the ICB for approval. The ICB is not currently aware of any need or any application to relocate in 2026.

4.4. What steps are being taken to improve pharmacy provision in Strood, ensuring local residents have reliable access to essential medications and advice?

4.4.1. Determining whether there is adequate community pharmacy service provision within an area is a function of each Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB). The Board is responsible for undertaking and publishing a

Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) every 3 years. The last PNA that was published in 2022 did not identify any gaps in pharmaceutical services. The process has commenced for development of the next PNA which will be published towards the end of 2025.

- 4.4.2. For information, there are currently 7 pharmacies on the pharmaceutical list in Strood, and a further 11 pharmacies in Rochester

Kamsons Pharmacy	29 Darnley Road	Strood
Hobbs Pharmacy	41-43 Wells Road, Marlow Park,	Strood
Boots the Chemists	83 High Street	Strood
Williams Chemist	86 Frindsbury Road	Frindsbury
Bryant Road Pharmacy	59-61 Bryant Road	Strood
Tesco Pharmacy	3 Cuxton Road	Strood
Pharmacy @ Gun Lane	Gun Lane Medical Centre	Strood, Rochester

5. Risk management

- 5.1. There are no significant risks to the Council arising from this report.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1. There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this report

7. Legal implications

- 7.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report

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Appendices

None

Background papers

None