

10th August 2021

FAO:

- Rhona Atkinson, Chair of the Integration Joint Board
- Pamela Milliken, Chief Officer Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership
- Professor Caroline Hiscox, NHS Grampian Chief Executive

Dear Rhona, Pamela and Caroline,

We would like to raise our concerns - and those of an increasing number of residents - with you regarding the future of Aboyne Hospital.

The general feeling is that the hospital will be closed because in the recent past, in Deeside and in Aberdeenshire, the views of residents have been ignored in favour of what seems to some to be 'a done deal'. For example, and quoting one resident, "we previously fought for the retention of the Maternity Unit at Torphins and was successful twice, though it eventually became a Birthing Unit at Aboyne only to be closed a year or two later."

Ward Councillors have asked for reassurance regarding the future of Aboyne Hospital; however, the concern is that the questions asked by us are not being answered, and the matter is further aggravated by a comment that the challenge - when re-opening Aboyne Hospital - was a shortage of staff.

The information provided thus far is that the Strategic Needs Assessment is a comprehensive process to engage with communities to consider the needs of the Deeside community, however living in and representing our communities, we have some specific questions for you:

1. When will the Strategic Needs Assessment start and what is the planned duration?
2. Which communities along Deeside and Upper Donside [who rely on services provided by Aboyne Hospital] will be consulted, and will there be an in-person consultation for those who are unable to participate online?
3. Will Councillors and stakeholders be able to review and comment on the proposed consultation ahead of public consultation, and what weight will be given to our views on the planned engagement?
4. Can you share the Terms of Reference which will govern how you weight the responses to questions asked in the Strategic Needs Assessment?
5. Can you advise what other work is being done or has been done that will be shared with the Integrated Joint Board [IJB] to enable them to make the decision relating to hospital provision on Deeside and Upper Donside?
6. When will the report be produced, when will the recommendations be presented to the IJB, and will there be further consultation on the proposed changes and how soon after will changes be implemented?
7. Will you re-open Aboyne hospital while the Strategic Needs Assessment is being carried out?

8. If all staff were to return from Covid related duties, do you have enough staff to re-open Aboyne Hospital?
9. Would you agree that the closure of Aboyne Hospital or loss of services would be unacceptable to the local medical practitioners and the community?

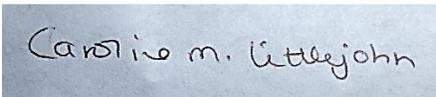
Residents are concerned about the centralisation of services in Aberdeen and the distances that residents [patients or family members] will need to travel.

It is a concern that if you do value Aboyne Hospital, that your colleagues cannot simply issue a statement saying “we do value Aboyne hospital, it will remain part of our service offering post Covid, however the services we propose to offer may be restructured as a consequence of the wider impact of Covid and our continuing response to it..” or something similar, but no such reassurance has been provided.

There is the feeling of there being a lack of transparency; there is limited detail regarding the process, there is an unwillingness to comment on the re-opening of Aboyne Hospital, and together with past precedent – centralisation and recent closures – there is a growing concern that decisions may have already been made and that a consultation is aimed at supporting the decision to close Aboyne Hospital, or to reduce the services currently available.

We would welcome your response to our questions and your reassurance regarding the future of Aboyne Hospital. I would be grateful if you could copy all the signatories in your replies.

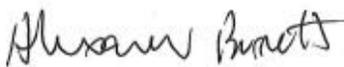
Kind regards,



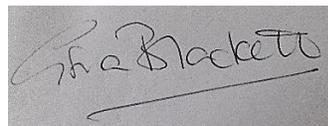
Caroline Littlejohn
Chair of Friends of Aboyne Hospital



Clr Paul Gibb
Aboyne, Upper Deeside and Donside Councillor



Alexander Burnett MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Aberdeenshire West



Clr Geva Blakett
Aboyne, Upper Deeside and Donside Councillor

cc:

clr.p.gibb@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
clr.g.blakett@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
alexander.burnett.msp@parliament.scot