

Councillor Ian Leake
Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny Commission
Bracknell Forest Council
Easthampstead House
Town Square
Bracknell, Berkshire
RG12 1AQ

Chief Executive's Office

Trust Headquarters
1 Armstrong Way
Southall
UB2 4SA

Tel: 020 8354 8067

Email: jacky.vincent@wlmht.nhs.uk

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Dear Councillor Leake,

I have to admit to being somewhat surprised on receiving an email yesterday from Richard Beaumont expressing your concerns that I had not replied to your letter of 12th August. I had written a letter in reply, unfortunately it had not been mailed; please accept my most sincere apologies. In your letter dated 12 August 2014 you address a number of concerns, which I hope I can answer below.

Fear of crime - As mentioned in my previous correspondence to you, the sirens used at Broadmoor Hospital are 60 years old, no longer fit for purpose and are becoming increasingly unreliable. Following the false siren activation in July, it was clear from the media coverage on BBC south that a number of Bracknell residents expressed real concern that an escape had taken place, which of course exacerbates the anxieties that communities have with regards to the 'fear of crime'. We have spent many millions of pounds in our security provision at the hospital in recent years to prevent an escape from ever happening. With this in mind, I fail to see how keeping the sirens would reduce the fear of crime issue you raise.

Consulting parish councils - . In consulting the parishes which have sirens located in their areas, I agree we did not include Binfield Parish Council. However, we have since written to them and detailed our proposals and asked if they would like a presentation. Additionally John Hourihan has extended an invitation to the Parish Council for them to visit Broadmoor Hospital, to better understand how we have invested in security at the hospital to prevent the occurrence of an escape.

Since your letter of 22nd July we have received correspondence from Wokingham Borough Council Oversight and Scrutiny Commission. We too have offered them an opportunity to hear John Hourihan's presentation and also to come and visit the hospital. Neither Binfield Parish Council or Wokingham Borough Council have accepted the invitation.

Given that our physical security arrangements are an integral part of what keeps our communities safe, I think it would be of enormous value for the Bracknell Forest Council Oversight and Scrutiny Commission to come to Broadmoor to have a look at those arrangements to see for yourself just how tight these are.

Schools cascade system - The cascade system has been in place for many years. Its success is borne out of the excellent partnership arrangements in place between the Trust, the Local Authority Emergency Planning Teams and the police forces of Thames Valley, Hampshire and Surrey. If you have concerns about the effectiveness of the system, may I ask that these are addressed immediately through the Bracknell Forest Council Emergency Planning team in order that we can work together with Thames Valley Police to identify methods of improving the cascade system. As you know, the system is tested every term and twice annually at other times. I would add that the cascade system reaches 174 educational establishments, most of which are situated outside the area in which the sirens can be heard.

Following the public consultation, the senior management team at Broadmoor Hospital have agreed to decommission seven of the 13 sirens. We are yet to identify the decommissioning and replacement process. All councils and parish councils consulted will be informed of the process once we have drawn up the necessary plans.

I would be glad to attend either of the meetings that you have suggested and will ask John Hourihan to accompany me. However, I do think that the benefits of the Oversight and Scrutiny Commission visiting Broadmoor as I suggest above, would greatly enhance your understanding when discussing your concerns.

If you would like to visit the hospital, please let my PA Jacky Vincent know by email and she can make necessary arrangements.

Yours sincerely,



Steve Shrubbs
Chief Executive