

Councillor Tim Holton
Chairman
Overview and Scrutiny
Management Committee
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Dear Councillor Holton

Thank you for your letter regarding the decommissioning of some of the sirens at Broadmoor Hospital. I appreciate the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee's discussion on the issue and am grateful for your acknowledgment of the improvements we've made to security over recent years. We are absolutely committed to ensuring our local communities remain and feel safe.

Since we started the consultation exercise earlier this year, our director of security at Broadmoor, John Hourihan, has attended various council meetings to those authorities where a siren currently exists. He has given reasons for our proposals and has explained why we intend to keep certain sirens in the vicinity to the hospital.

The public engagement that has taken place so far has provided rich feedback on how the general public feel about these proposals via their elected local representatives. The overwhelming message has been one of support. Only Surrey Heath Council had just one councillor that has shown concern – no other parish councils have written to express objection.

As the consultation has concluded and we have considered views from local people, parish and town councils, we now intend to proceed with decommissioning those sirens we have identified in our proposals. These sirens, which are 60 years old, are no longer fit for purpose and are increasingly unreliable. A recent example of their failure followed the thunderstorms last month which resulted in the alarms being activated overnight, causing unnecessary distress and disturbance to thousands of local residents.

You also appreciate that Broadmoor Hospital today is very different from 1952 when the first siren was installed. We have invested many millions of pounds in our security to prevent an escape from happening. Indeed the incident that you referred to in your letter did not happen at Broadmoor. The patient absconded while receiving treatment at an acute hospital.

Despite central government approval to redevelop Broadmoor Hospital, the financial constraints upon the trust are significant. I am sure you will appreciate that as a public sector healthcare provider we must spend taxpayers' money wisely and maximise the benefit to patients and those needing our care. The cost to replace all of the sirens is approximately £400k, the cost to retain sirens locally is approximately £183k. The trust which is responsible for Broadmoor Hospital also deals with much broader mental health issues. Were we to invest money unnecessarily in new sirens at Broadmoor Hospital, we would have less to spend on dementia care or local services for those experiencing mental illness in the community.

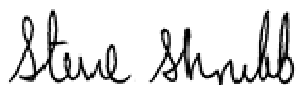
I am sure you will understand that the trust must make funding decisions objectively rather than allocate resources to retain outdated technology that no longer does the job for which it was intended.

You raised concerns in your letter that you were not formally consulted. While John delivered his presentation to the Wokingham Without Parish Council meeting on 7 April 2014, he would be pleased to attend your next Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Please let me know the date of your next meeting if you would like John to attend and he would be happy to answer any queries or concerns you may have. I would also like to extend an opportunity to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to come and have a tour of the hospital to better understand how we have invested in our security to prevent an escape from occurring. I will ask John to contact you in order to facilitate this visit.

The public information video on our trust website provides appropriate reassurance about why we intend to decommission a number of the sirens and just how secure Broadmoor is. Please see the link below <http://www.wlmht.nhs.uk/bm/broadmoor-hospital/the-broadmoor-siren/>

If you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Steve Shrubbs
Chief Executive