



**WELWYN & HATFIELD
KEEP THE NHS PUBLIC CAMPAIGN
No.2 February 2007
CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER**



1st CAMPAIGN MEETING @ 8pm
15th February 2007: Ludwick Family Centre
Hall Grove: Welwyn Garden City
Everyone welcome get involved and save your hospital the QEII.

SoS/Task Force Inaugural Meeting Campus West Welwyn Garden City 12/2/07

The SoS Campaign itself was the brainchild of local Welwyn Hatfield MP Grant Shapps and associates, and the 'Task Force' in conception is a natural development of this campaign. The meeting of twenty eight people included local representatives of the Labour, Liberal Democrat, Tory and Green parties, and Union staff representatives on the North and East Herts. PCT. The meetings chair Grant Shapps introduced the proceedings with the observation that what united those involved was that the concept of 'Investing in your health' had been bought into with the notion of one general hospital with regional health centres as the model, with first the prospect of the Hatfield 'Super hospital' and then the revised idea of either a revamped QEII or Lister hospitals. Whatever the differences he opined between those who continued to opt for the Hatfield hospital, supported the QEII or wanted both QEII and Lister open, we could all work together for the maintenance of health care provision locally. The following Action Groups were suggested and formed to carry out the Task Forces activities their Chair's and members are as follows:

- 1] Rallies & Marches: Chair Margaret Birleson.
Members: Mick O'Farrell, Jill Weston, Ron Wheeler, Stuart Reeves.
- 2] Petitions: Chair Mike Hobday.
Members: Dennis Hedges, Ray Willoughby, Fay Willoughby, Bill Lee, Frances Eastwell.
- 3] Evidence and Judicial Review: Chair Charles Bunker
Members: Nigel Quinton, Ann Wells, Hannah Middleton, Stuart Reeves, Dennis Lewis, Maureen Cook, Steven Markiewicz, Michel Saminaden.
- 4] Finance: Chair Vicky Adkins
Members: Mick O'Farrell, Dennis Lewis, Maureen Cook.
- 5] Publicity: Chair; Terry Mitchinson.
Members; Grant Shapps, Andy Canter, Lister Newcombe
- 6] External Liaison Group: Chair; Mandy Perkins
Members: Hazel Laming, Tony Skottowe, Dawn Lee, Ray Willoughby.

An early prospective hurdle was highlighted that of the Hatfield 'Super hospital' was it finally dead and buried or was it still worth pursuing? It had to be faced as it provided a possible divergence of interest for the campaign could it after all push for both this and the QEII?

A lengthy discussion ensued to hopefully resolve the apparent impasse.

The Labour Party's Mike Hobday considered that the campaign in support of it had brought about a possible change of heart from the PCT in its consideration to rule it out completely.

The Liberal Democrats considered that it was the only truly viable option and we should work exclusively for it to avoid any possible confusion.

Labour Party's Margaret Birleson considered it as the best option and was being repeatedly asked why it wasn't at the top of the health agenda.

The editor of the local rag Terry Mitchinson said that when it was first muted he had been all for it but now it's been shelved he was in favour of the best possible health care provision for the area. He had been reliably informed that the proposed was now no longer available and that if it was still to be considered a new site would have to be found.

The trusts Staff side secretary of Unison Hanna Middleton said that both she and the staff were in favour of the Hatfield hospital, but if it were not possible then they would prefer that both hospitals the QEII & Lister be kept open and improved.

The Green Party representative Jill Weston felt there was no need for an immediate settling on Hatfield that we should look at the available evidence first, and that she was in favour of the best possible health provision for the area.

The representative of the Welwyn Hatfield Keep the NHS Public Campaign Barry Cross was put out at Grant Shapps assertion that the 'Investors in your health' proposals had been bought into, especially when this was asserted at last years Patients Forum meeting and had been further annoyed by the assumption of the PCT that the discussions of the 'Status Quo' had been done and dusted and it was no longer an option. He was opposed to the 'Super hospital' as it would have meant the closure of the QEII and running down of the Lister hospitals, that one hospital alone either Hatfield, QEII or Lister could not cope with the present level of health care needs let alone the proposed increase of populace for the region and that all the hospitals were needed.

Questions were raised in support of the Hatfield site, as to the soundness of the building infrastructure at the QEII intimating that it was bad enough for it to be demolished, ideas that were considered as scandalous by QEII supporters.

The decision was made that the Evidence and Judicial Review Action Group would be the ideal forum for settling the position regarding the Hatfield hospital, as it was to evaluate all the medical and legal evidence of every possible option and its findings would be essential in helping to resolve the issue, especially in relation to any possible chance to convince the PCT to keep it on their agenda as a possible option.

The urgency of the task as well as its enormity was well illustrated throughout and the need for raising the issues especially in areas as yet untapped was highlighted for instance in relation to the University, as both an important concern still uninvolved in its attitude to local health care provision and an untapped resource of student activity in support of it. It was in areas such as these that the External Liaison Group would need to be especially involved in developing much needed contact and cooperation.

The Action Groups were formulated as indicated with people getting involved in areas that matched their specific interests and expertise. With the exception that Barry Cross wishing to avoid any confusion expressed that as a representative of a group he was there to report on the meeting to their forthcoming campaign meeting where all the issues raised would be fully discussed as well as the group's future working arrangements.

The meeting ended with the imperative for regular Action Groups meetings especially relating to the essential work of the Evidence group as its findings were crucial to the work of the whole undertaking.