

Central Bedfordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 9th September 2024

Subject: Healthcare Services in Leighton Buzzard

Summary

Between August 2023 and May 2024, BLMK ICB (Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board) developed an Outline Business Case (OBC) in relation to potential additional healthcare services in Leighton Buzzard. This followed the publication of an initial Feasibility Study earlier in 2023.

The work to develop the OBC was triggered in part by an announcement by Andrew Selous, the former MP for the area in February 2023 that an agreement had been reached with the (now former) Government that land held by the Department for Health & Social Care (DHSC) at Vandyke Road in Leighton Buzzard could be sold to fund additional healthcare capacity in the town.

The ICB had been due to publish the outputs from the Outline Business Case in May 2024. However, the announcement of the General Election required the publication to be delayed. The ICB is now working closely with colleagues from the DHSC and other relevant stakeholders to confirm the new Government's position on the potential sale of the Vandyke Road site and any capital funding that may be released by this.

In the meantime, local healthcare providers are continuing to deliver service improvements – see full details below - and the ICB is exploring short-term options for expanding the amount of space available in the town for seeing patients.

Background

Between August 2023 and May 2024, BLMK ICB (Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board) completed an Outline Business Case (OBC) in relation to additional healthcare services in Leighton Buzzard, following the completion of an initial Feasibility Study earlier in 2023.

This work was triggered by an announcement by the former MP for the area in February 2023 that an agreement had been reached with the (now former) Government that land held by the Department for Health & Social Care (DHSC) at Vandyke Road in Leighton Buzzard could be sold to fund additional healthcare capacity in the town.

The ICB provided six-weekly public updates during the development of the OBC and engaged with the local community to establish priorities (aided by a survey led by local Patient Participation Groups) to help consider potential options. The ICB has always been clear that there is no additional NHS funding available towards this project at this stage, and therefore all of the options considered were dependent on funding to be realised through the sale of the Vandyke Road site.

The ICB was due to publish the outputs from the business case in May 2024. However, the announcement of the General Election required the publication to be delayed (in line with national pre-election guidance for public bodies). The ICB is now working closely with DHSC officials and other local partners to confirm the new Government's position on the potential sale of the Vandyke Road site.

In the meantime, the ICB is exploring short-term options for expanding the amount of space available in the town for seeing patients. In particular, some additional space has become available at the Health Centre in the town (on Bassett Road), and the ICB are rapidly exploring with the landlord (NHS Property Services) the feasibility of creating additional space in the building suitable for the delivery of clinical services to help increase capacity.

Service Improvements

The three practices in the town (Bassett Road Surgery, Leighton Road Surgery and Salisbury House Surgery) are all members of Leighton Linslade Health Connections Primary Care Network (PCN). The PCN provides services to support the registered patients of each practice (a combined registered list of 52,300 patients as at 1st June 2024) and are based at the Health Centre at Bassett Road.

- All three GP practices now have Cloud Based Telephony, which is enabling them to review the number of calls received each day, the length of time to answer, the number of people in the queue and the number of calls dropped. This enables the practices to review their rotas and ensure that they have more capacity on days which are the busiest. It also enables them to dynamically increase the number of people answering the phones when the lines are busier. The new system also offers the facility for patients to request a 'call back' reducing the need for patients to hold.
- To support the practices the PCN has recruited a number of different roles including:
 - First Contact Physiotherapists
 - Clinical Pharmacists
 - Pharmacy Technicians
 - Paramedics
 - Care Co-ordinators
 - Digital and Transformation Lead
 - Health & Well Being Coach
 - Social Prescribing Link Workers

- There are a number of services that are run by the PCN including:
 - Administering Covid vaccinations as part of the booster programme.
 - Enhanced access appointments available between 6.30pm – 8pm, Monday to Friday and 9 – 5 on a Saturday and 9 – 1pm on a Sunday
 - Additional phlebotomy service delivered by PCN to support the individual practice services, providing an average of an extra 2,000 blood tests locally each month
 - MSK (Musculo-Skeletal)/Physiotherapy – pre-bookable and ‘on the day’ Service
 - ‘On the day’ medication queries service
 - Collaborative working with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services who are undertaking welfare visits to severely frail patients. Patients can self-refer for this service through the PCN.
 - Health Checks for carers
 - Proactively contacting patients about cancer reviews and support in primary care for these patients.
 - Proactively contacting patients to attend for Adult Mental Health reviews and onward referral to other appropriate services.
 - Proactively contacting patients who have been discharged from hospital, undertaking structure medication reviews, physical health checks and annual health checks for patients with learning disabilities.
 - Community Connections at Leighton Buzzard Library 13:00 – 15:00 fortnightly. This is a session where anyone can drop in to see the Social Prescriber, no appointment necessary, for a chat. They connect people to community services, voluntary services and offer advice and help.
 - New, starting in September, a Complex Cholesterol Management Clinic, run by our PCN Pharmacists for those who have uncontrolled cholesterol levels.
- Following the success of a combined same day access hub over the winter, which provided an additional 1,113 appointments January – March 2024, the PCN are developing plans to provide this service every day in the future. It has started in a small way with Physiotherapist appointments being directly bookable. January is expected to see the launch of an Integrated Minor Illnesses Clinic, run by the paramedics and including Minor Ailments which is pharmacist led.
- In addition, the following services are available in the town:

Service	Comments
Ultrasound	Non-obstetric ultrasound is available via the ‘Ultrasound Clinic’ who provide 2 sessions/week from Leighton Road site depending on demand
MSK/Physiotherapy	PCN employed physio who works across practices throughout the week providing an ‘on the day’ service

	Circle MSK service that provides dedicated weekly sessions in each practice plus a town wide service at the Leighton Road site
Eye clinic	This is available via 3 local opticians. Patients have to call the helpline number: 0800 316 9200 and they are triaged and if needed an appointment is arranged at one of 3 Leighton Buzzard opticians (Redferns, Specsavers & Kings)
Ear Irrigation / micro suction	All practices are commissioned under the Primary Care Framework to deliver this service.
Wound care/use of doppler	All practices are commissioned under the Primary Care Framework to deliver Wound care and use of doppler.

We are also pleased to report that [Pharmacy First](#) is now available in Leighton Buzzard. Seven local pharmacies are participating and 770 consultations have been completed between January and June 2024.

ENDS