

Council

Meeting date: 24 July 2023

Motions (1 total)

Motion A

Proposed by: Councillor Graham Beale

Seconded by: Councillor Martin Horwood

Cheltenham Maternity Matters

This Council:

1. Notes with concern the current extended closure until at least October this year of Cheltenham's maternity unit, the Aveta Birth Centre, to be followed by a "further review";
2. Notes and welcomes the excellent reputation of the midwife-led centre and its community midwifery and ante-natal services, the central importance of choice for local mothers in the planning of local maternity services and agrees with the Royal College of Midwives that "placing women at the centre of their own care is crucial to improving pregnancy outcomes for both mother and baby";
3. Further notes and welcomes the finding of the 2016 Cumberlege report into better maternity outcomes that "women almost universally value local services" and that maternity services need to be "safer, more personalised, kinder, professional and more family friendly" and believes that smaller, local facilities like Aveta provide just such a service in a way that is inevitably harder in much larger, less personal units;
4. Notes that the stated reason for the extended closure is the increasing vacancy rate and difficulty in recruiting midwives, understands the pressures on the NHS not least in recruitment and retention following our separation from the EU and the government's mismanagement of workforce planning;
5. But recalls with concern that staffing issues were given as the reasons for the initial closure or downgrade of other services at Cheltenham General Hospital including the 24-hour Type 1 A&E service which has never been restored and the piecemeal loss of other services including our children's ward and general surgery which have never been reversed;
6. Welcomes the recent announcement of a £2.7m investment in maintaining a purpose-built birth unit and earnestly hopes that this investment is not at risk from the extended closure and uncertainty;

7. Remembers the huge public campaign, Cheltenham Maternity Matters, to save Cheltenham's maternity unit from proposed closure in 2006 which brought together MPs, this council, trades unions and royal colleges and local campaigners and reflected the huge support from local people for a friendly, local maternity service within quick and easy reach;

8. Invites the Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities to communicate the contents of this motion to the chief executive of Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and all members of the NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board, and to seek reassurance that the NHS remains unambiguously committed to a permanent maternity service at Cheltenham General Hospital.