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Neil Bunney,  
Practice Manager,  
Skerne Medical Group,  
Harbinson House,  
Sedgefield,  
Stockton-on-Tees  
TS21 3BN

6 December 2018

Dear Neil,

### **Future of Skerne Medical Group**

I would again like to thank Dr Hearman and yourself for attending the County Council's special Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4 December 2018.

The Committee considered the verbal update report from Dr Christine Hearman, GP at Skerne Medical Group following the conclusion of patient and stakeholder engagement activity regarding the review of how GP services are provided in the Trimdon Village/Trimdon Station/Fishburn and Sedgefield localities.

Members noted the difficulties experienced by the practice in terms of the dramatic shortage of GPs the practice faces and that by February 2019 the practice will have 40% fewer doctors than 2½ years ago and feels unable to safely staff four separate sites.

Members noted the response rates and levels of engagement in the process with over 400 people attending the engagement events and the 70 comments received via the practice website. The practice then reported on the generic issues raised during the engagement process as well as specific issues regarding each individual site.

The Committee acknowledge that the GP resource now available at the Skerne Medical Group has reduced since the initial report to Committee on 15 November from 5 GPs to 3 which has compounded the problems.

### **Members**

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Following consideration of the engagement feedback and responses made members are aware that the practice are proposing to close the Fishburn and Trimdon Village sites and retain the Sedgefield and Trimdon Colliery sites.

The Committee are concerned that one of the sites to close actually had the second largest practice list (Fishburn) and which included half of the registered patients from Trimdon Village who had previously been encouraged to use the Fishburn site. Members are also concerned at the limited evidence to explain the rationale for closing the two sites from a patient perspective.

The Committee are concerned at the absence of any detailed medical needs assessment having been carried out across the 4 sites based upon patient contacts and any associated risk assessments regarding the proposed change including accessibility, car parking and availability of public transport as part of the options appraisal process.

The AHWOSC wish to reaffirm its previous recommendation to the Skerne Medical Group that the potential for continued GP provision within Trimdon Village should form a key part of your proposed review and any option for future services developed as part of the review.

The Committee also contests the adequacy of the consultation as the letter sent to all patients on the practice lists contained conflicting information regarding lack of mention of a second potential site closure which was publicised on the Practice website and provided at the engagement meetings.

The Committee have copied in representatives of Durham Dales Easington and Sedgefield CCG to this correspondence to ensure that the views of the Adults Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee are communicated to the Primary Care Committee when it meets on 18 December 2018.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Robinson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Cllr John Robinson  
Chair of the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Durham County Council

c.c.

Stewart Findlay, Chief Clinical Officer, Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield CCG

Nicola Bailey, Chief Operating Officer, Durham Dales, Easington and Sedgefield CCG