

**Whitehall Medical Practice**  
**Questions raised by Cllr Vasmer**

**1. When was the decision made to close the Whitehall Medical Practice and who made that decision?**

Unlike other practices across Shropshire, the Whitehall Medical Practice Contract was commissioned by Shropshire Primary Care Trust in 2009 under an Alternative Provider of Medical Services Contract (APMS). This type of contract is time limited and after several extensions the contract ends in September 2019 as there is no formal route to extend the contract beyond that date. After engaging with patients and stakeholders, the CCG decided to find a new provider and commenced a procurement process.

Unfortunately when the CCG went out to procurement for a new provider, no-one came forward and therefore the CCG needed to consider their options further. Although the timescale for bidders to respond to the tender had passed, the procurement was still live and no public discussion can take place during an active procurement, therefore a discussion took place in the confidential part of the Primary Care Commissioning Committee (PCCC) on Wednesday, 5 June 2019 (*PCCC is a committee of the CCG with responsibility for making decisions around areas of Primary Care which NHS England has delegated to the CCG*).

Committee was presented with options around extending the procurement or dispersing the list. It was felt there was not enough time to extend the procurement before the contract ended and as the contract could not be extended further, the decision was made to disperse the patient list.

**2. How long was the period given for providers to tender to run the Whitehall Practice?**

A Prior Information Notice (PIN) giving advance notice of the tender was issued on 18 March, 2019. This acts as a heads up to the open market that we will be offering a contract and it is advertised through a national NHS portal.

The tender went live at 5pm on Thursday, 25 Apr, 2019, and ended at 12pm on Saturday, 25 May, 2019.

This is a standard recognised procurement timeline and the contract was on offer to all suitable providers and the existing current contract holder was also able to put forward an application if they wished to do so.

**3. What attempt was made to encourage providers to tender?**

As part of the procurement process before the contract is even open to bids, an advanced notice is released, informing potential bidders what our intentions are and that we will be going to procurement for a new contract. This is a Prior Information Notice and it is displayed

through a national NHS portal so approved and recognised providers can express an interest.

**4. Was the existing provider encouraged to tender and did they tender?**

During a national tender, the CCG is not able to approach individual providers to put forward a bid, however the existing provider was fully aware of the process and along with any other party who met the criteria, were welcome to submit an expression of interest. We would have been happy to receive a bid from Malling Health.

**5. When it became clear that nobody was going to tender why was there no fallback position that would have allowed the practice to continue whilst other options were explored?**

The CCG has to follow national guidance and due to the nature of the APMS contract there was no ability to extend the contract further. We had already extended the contract to its maximum and secured a further extension from NHS England whilst we sought patients' views and carried out the procurement.

**6. In the original consultation on the future of the Practice the CCG promised to keep patients informed. All the feedback prior to the closure announcement appeared to be positive – a view that has been corroborated by many people – so why was there no indication that there might be a problem?**

During any procurement the outcome cannot be pre-empted and as a CCG we shared the patients' hopes of securing a new provider, which is why we went through the procurement process.

When the CCG engaged with patients last autumn we explained that the contract was coming to an end and that we were seeking patient views.

We again contacted patients in January 2019 to advise them of the re-procurement and said that as with any tender exercise there was a possibility that there would be no successful bidder and if this happened the CCG would need to reconsider their options, one of which might be to disperse the patient list where patients may have to find an alternative GP practice.

Upon the decision of PCCC in June, the procurement was ended and patients were advised.

**7. Was Shropshire Council consulted before the announcement of the closure?**

This was a live procurement and the Council was not part of the procurement process although stakeholders were written to at the start of the process and at again in June.

**8. Was Whitehall's Patient Participation Group consulted?**

Members of the patient group, as well as all registered patients of the practice, were invited to take part in the survey and they were also provided with an update.

**9. Was Shropshire Patient Group consulted?**

The survey was only for registered patients of Whitehall Medical Practice.

**10. Was the Patient Advice and Liaison Service Informed?**

The Primary Care Team briefed Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALs) and continue to answer specific queries that they have.

**11. Was Healthwatch Shropshire consulted?**

Yes, Healthwatch was kept informed.

**12. Were any patient representatives on Shropshire CCG boards, committees and groups consulted?**

There are four lay members on the CCGs Governing Body appointed from the community, who sit on the PCCC and were involved in the process and its governance.

**13. You were in negotiations with Shropshire Council about using new premises for the Practice – how far did they progress?**

We had an agreement in principle for the location of new premises, close to the existing practice, and were ready to progress this once we had a confirmed bidder.

**14. Were the remaining practices consulted about the possible closure of Whitehall and what was their reaction?**

All GP practices were aware of the re-procurement of the Whitehall practice and were contacted as part of the engagement in the autumn. The Primary Care Team at the CCG has also contacted the practices since the decision was made and personally visited practices in the immediate vicinity of Whitehall Medical Practice to brief and advise them on the situation. This engagement and support will continue over the next few months as patients transfer to new practices.

As registered patients at Whitehall Medical Practice come from across the whole County not just the Shrewsbury area, we have also sent written updates and briefs to all our practices and stakeholders.

**15. What assessment was made of the remaining Shrewsbury Practices to absorb more than 3,000 patients given that most are working to near capacity? Claremont Bank Practice says that its list is closed, and Belvidere will only accept 5 new patients per day.**

The CCG can confirm that all Practice in Shropshire CCG have an open list, which means that they can accept patients who live in their agreed catchment area. All practice areas can be found on individual practice web sites, with the majority of patients having a choice of

practice to register at. The Primary Care Team is in regular contact with all practices to ensure that any issues raised are responded to.

**16. How does the CCG plan to accommodate the new residents that will be moving into new housing developments and relieve the current pressure on GP practices?**

The CCG works closely with the Local Authority to determine population growth and new housing developments. We have recently commissioned an estates review which is due to report in August to ensure that the primary care estate is sufficient to meet the increasing demand. Linked to this, is significant work to ensure recruitment and retention of staff across Practices. Recent data has showed Shropshire has a higher than national average ratio of GPs to patients and all our practices are rated as good, or outstanding, by the Care Quality Commission, the independent regulator of health and social care in England.

**17. Is the CCG aware that some services provided by the Whitehall Practice are not offered by other practices? Before closing Whitehall was consideration given to how these needs might be catered for?**

All practices in Shropshire offer the same essential and enhanced services, although their method of delivery may vary according to local need. Patients are advised that if they have any specific request to please discuss them with their new practice.