

The Rt Hon William Hague MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

10 March 2014

Dear Jim,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Scrutiny of Health Committee of North Yorkshire County Council ahead of its meeting on Friday 14 March to discuss whether to refer the decision of the Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby Clinical Commissioning Group to reconfigure services at the Friarage Hospital to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel.

Unfortunately I am unable to attend the meeting so I am grateful that you and your Committee members will take the time to consider my comments during your deliberations.

The Friarage Hospital is a vitally important healthcare resource for thousands of people in my constituency and many of them will have received an outstanding service. This is particularly true of the maternity and children's services which have an excellent local reputation and which the National Clinical Advisory Team recognised in its report in December 2011.

Throughout this process I have received a large number of letters and calls from constituents expressing their deep concern for the Friarage and their huge concern with the proposed reconfiguration. There has also been strong opposition voiced at public meetings to these proposals, particularly with regard to maternity provision.

It remains my view that there is a clear gulf between the CCG's preferred clinical model and the public desire to maintain the current level of paediatric and maternity provision.

I recognise, as I have from the beginning, that there are legitimate challenges with the current model of maternity and paediatric services. This is largely due to the changing nature of paediatric provision which is becoming increasingly specialised.

You will be aware of other similar sized maternity units in the country which have maintained their current level of provision by working with other hospitals in the area, adapting their rota system, or by developing their nursing skills.

The CCG has also considered several additional proposals that were made during the formal public consultation process, as it was encouraged to do by the Secretary of State for Health following advice from the IRP.

Please address correspondence to:

1 Omega Business Village, Thurston Road, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL6 2NJ

The situation at the Friarage may require a different and unique solution from all these examples and I am not convinced that all efforts to find this and to maintain a fuller service have been exhausted.

For that reason, and given the very serious level of public anxiety, it is vitally important that this decision is looked at in every possible forum.

I wrote to you in November 2012 when you were first considering referring this matter to the IRP. At the time I spoke of the "clear gulf" between the CCG's preferred clinical model and the views of my constituents. That remains just as true today as it did then.

It is critical that maternity and paediatric services at the Friarage Hospital have the full confidence of the people that use them. An independent and thorough analysis of the situation by the IRP is now necessary for that.

I welcome the development that GPs have insisted on a seven day model of paediatric care, rather than the five that was previously recommended. As I have said publicly, this will go some way to meet the concerns of parents who were worried about access to care should their child need to visit hospital on the weekend.

However, I still have strong concerns about the assurances provided by other local healthcare providers, especially Darlington Memorial Hospital, that they have the capacity to handle safely and effectively any extra demand as a result of these changes.

We need concrete assurances and firm detail about how local hospitals would handle the greater demands and we must hear more from Darlington Hospital about their 'triggers' to manage a situation where there was an increase above the 'most likely' activity level.

I stress again that given the high level of public anxiety about this issue, the strong desirability of maintaining a 24/7 service, and the outstanding reservations about additional capacity at local hospitals, it would benefit greatly from a thorough analysis by the IRP and to help ensure that this issue has been looked at in every possible forum.

Thank you again for taking the time to consider my comments.



**The Rt Hon. William Hague MP**

Cllr Jim Clark  
North Yorkshire County Council  
County Hall, Northallerton  
DL7 8AD