

APPENDIX A - Health in the Ffestiniog Area - Response to Recommendations

	Recommendation	Health Board Response	Cabinet Member Response
		<p>In response to your email dated 25th September 2017, requesting an initial response to the recommendations made by the Health Scrutiny Committee, regarding Blaenau Ffestiniog, we can now respond, see below. We note however that some recommendations ((ii) and part of (iii)) have changed from the ones agreed publicly on 4 September.</p>	
i	<p>That the Care Scrutiny Committee calls on the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to share all the background information that was part of the original decision to change the provision of facilities and health services in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area.</p>	<p>A review was undertaken five years ago on <i>Healthcare in north Wales is changing</i>, and a comprehensive set of supporting information was available publicly at the time. The specific proposals dealing with Blaenau Ffestiniog were part of a full strategic review of initial and community services across north Wales, which meant that a lot of data was available and is still available. If requests are made for specific fields, we are happy to discuss them.</p> <p>We will send two documents for your information: <i>Report on the Outcome of the Public Consultation & Recommendations to the Board and Opinion Research Services – Assessing the Evidence – Executive Summary</i> – documents to follow.</p>	<p>The response to this recommendation is a matter for BCUHB. The information is not held by Gwynedd Council Departments.</p>
ii	<p>That the Committee requests a report immediately on the health</p>	<p>It is difficult to respond in detail to this recommendation, since we did not truly get to grips with this in the meeting. By presuming that</p>	<p>The information and background data that would be the basis for such an assessment is not in the ownership of Gwynedd Council. The information is</p>

<p>provision in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area by an independent agency, to be presented for the attention of the Care Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>That the Committee calls upon the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to regularly monitor information and data in relation to the effectiveness of current health services in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area and the well-being of its residents and to commit to adapting/changing the provision if there is evidence to justify this.</p>	<p>the request is asking the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to commission a report like this, I would have several concerns. Firstly, we are not aware of suitable body and are having difficulty to see how we could tender and chooses a body like this, that would of course take time and would not be done immediately, in line with the recommendation. Secondly, we would have major difficulties in redirecting public funds from service provision to pay for a report like this. Thirdly, our main focus is to provide what we have promised, by the date we have committed to and anything that would pull us away from this would be a great worry for us. We will be undertaking a post project evaluation of the new Centre before long, according to the requirement of the Welsh Government, with a view of assessing the benefits and results achieved by the project. We expect services to continue to evolve and expand in the new Centre and in the wider community, in line with the <i>'Care closer to Home'</i> strategy by the Welsh Government and the Health Board.</p> <p>In summary on recommendation (ii), the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board will not by funding a report by an external agency on the provision of health in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area. We will be undertaking a post project evaluation of the new Centre before long, according to the requirement of the Welsh Government, with the aim of assessing the benefits and results achieved by the project. We</p>	<p>held by BCUHB and it was their duty to engage suitably and to collect and analyse the relevant information in order to take the original decision. As a Council, and as an important partner to the Health Board, one must trust that the original assessment work was done in a balanced, thorough and fair manner. Whilst we obviously acknowledge the concerns of a faction of the County's residents regarding the decision making process on the future health provision in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area, I am not aware of any evidence that questions the propriety of the process nor justifies re visiting the original decision.</p> <p>With the new Health Centre to open in the near future in Blaenau Ffestiniog, I believe it is the duty of the BCUHB to monitor information and data in relation to the effectiveness of the current health services in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area and the wellbeing of its inhabitants regularly. If the information collected evidences that the provision does not meet with the needs of the residents of the area then I would expect that the BCUHB would adjust the provision if there is evidence to justify it. Naturally, I would expect any adjustments to be made in the context of operational/executive practicality in any other area of the County or neighbouring counties.</p> <p>I should also note here that I fully agree with comments made by Members of the Scrutiny Committee on several occasions in the past</p>
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		<p>expect services to continue to evolve and expand in the new Centre and in the wider community, in line with the <i>'Care closer to Home'</i> strategy by the Welsh Government and the Health Board.</p> <p>We cannot commit to substantially reform/change the provision.</p>	<p>regarding the role and duties of the North Wales Community Health Council (NWCHC). The NWCHC is an independent community health services protective body which represents the voice of the patients and public who use health services in our area. The NWCHC plays an essential part in influencing the way health services are planned and provided in our area in order to ensure the best possible health and wellbeing results for the people of north Wales. The NWCHC has strength in its statutory status and in its ability to represent the interests of patients and the public without any privileged benefits. This includes an element of monitoring the effectiveness and suitability of the provision of health services across north Wales. The NWCHC is a link between those who plan and provide services and those who use them.</p> <p>The mission statement of the NWCHC states clearly that they will seek the views and experiences of patients and the public to ensure a stronger voice by the public that reflects what they have to say by the health services in north Wales. It will co-ordinate with the Health Board to ensure that it welcomes and learns from the feedback and information provided by the NWCHC, thus ensuring that the services provided not only meet the expectations of the users, but are of the highest possible standards.</p> <p>In terms of their statutory role it is likely that the NWCHC is a body more appropriate than the</p>
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iii	<p>Stemming from the evidence submitted by the Blaenau Ffestiniog Memorial Hospital Defence Committee regarding the lack of response to petitions and correspondence in the past, that the Board give detailed consideration to engagement and consultation shortcomings in the past in order to improve future arrangements. The Health Board is encouraged to communicate regularly and effectively with the residents of the Blaenau Ffestiniog area in relation to the provision of facilities and local health services.</p>	<p>The Health Board has always made its best to acknowledge and respond to all correspondence and to formally acknowledge any petition received as part of HciNWic. Of course, we apologise if there were any circumstances where there was no response to correspondence.</p> <p>Every request by the Blaenau Defence Committee to meet with the Health Board's Executive/Operational Team have been accepted and organised. There are robust arrangements in place to record and acknowledge every correspondence³ received by the Chief Executive/Chairman's office.</p> <p>Over the past 12 months, an extensive engagement and communication exercise has been undertaken by the Western area Engagement and Communication Officers, including a number of engagement activities locally in Blaenau and regular newsletters and updates have been sent out and put on social media. A draft Engagement and Communication Plan has been created for the Canolfan Goffa Ffestiniog for the next 12 months and beyond.</p>	<p>There is no such thing as a perfect consultation/engagement process and there are always lessons to be learnt in terms of what has worked well and what was not as good. I'm sure that the BCUHB will learn lessons for the future.</p> <p>Following changes in provision on this scale, it is essential to remember that effective communication and contact does not end after a decision has been made. This must continue whilst preparing for the change and of course when monitoring the effects of the change after it has been implemented.</p> <p>I will be encouraging BCUHB to communicate regularly and effectively with the residents of the Blaenau Ffestiniog area in relation to the provision of local health amenities and services.</p>

iv	<p>The Cabinet Member for the Environment and the Cabinet Member for Care are requested to commission an assessment of the convenience and accessibility of health services via public and community transport within the Ysbyty Alltwen catchment area. Once the priority given to this catchment area is completed, they could then consider if there was any benefit to undertake similar assessments in other areas.</p>	<p>Access to services in terms of public and community transport, especially in a rural area, is a major priority to the Health Board, and we welcome this kind of assessment of services that are available in our rural areas, with the aim of ensuring improvements.</p>	<p>I can confirm that I have already had initial informal discussions with the Environment Cabinet Member and relevant officers with the view of preparing a brief for commissioning an assessment of the convenience and accessibility of health services by public and community transport within the catchment area of Ysbyty Alltwen. I agree that priority should be given to this area and I do not have opposition in principle to hold similar assessments in other catchment areas of community hospitals in future. Naturally, considerations of capacity and resources will influence the timetabling of a full programme of transport assessments.</p>
v	<p>That the need for suitable homes for older people included the provision of extra care housing in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area is fully aired jointly with the Cabinet Member for Care, Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture and the Health Board together with the Gwynedd Housing Partnership..</p>	<p>A matter for Tai Gwynedd</p>	<p>The Department has considered the demand for alternative provision for older people as part of the Older People Housing Strategy, and Meirionnydd has been confirmed as one of the areas of need in Gwynedd. It would be suitable to consider the demand for this kind of development if there was a means of finding a suitable location and money to materialise. We are now unable to present an application for resources from the Extra Care Housing fund because it does not exist but discussions are taking place with the Government in terms of increasing the provision of homes for older people across Gwynedd. It is likely that the Extra Care model would need to be adjusted somewhat due to the recent changes in the housing benefit arrangements. I and the</p>

			Housing, Leisure and Culture Cabinet Member are confident that Housing Societies would be willing to co-operate on a revised Extra Care Housing plan together with the Council and other partners.
vi	That the Care Scrutiny Committee calls on the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and Gwynedd Council to work closely and jointly and take appropriate practical steps to recruit care and health staff in order that there are full teams in place to maintain services in the Blaenau Ffestiniog area and across the County.	The Health Board acknowledges the importance of working closely with all of its local authority partners. The Western Area has an excellent working relationship with Gwynedd Council and recruiting and retaining health and social care staff is a major priority for both institutions. We are working in partnership with Gwynedd Council to develop five integrated community resources teams across the County. The teams undertake the person centred approach and records and gets rid of any barriers in the system in order to ensure effective and timely service which centres on what is important to the supported individual. The aim is 'to help me live my life the way that I want to'. We also encourage and have launched a campaign called 'training, working and living in north Wales'.	I fully agree with this recommendation. Ensuring that we have the capacity and suitable skills to provide health and care services is essential. A number of factors including salary levels, career pathway and image of the work influences the recruiting problems that we face at present and the weight of these factors varies from area to area across the County. Working independently of each other would perpetuate some of these problems that we see at present such as staff moving from one authority or providers to another whilst the fundamental lack in terms of capacity to care for older people continues. These gaps are a barrier for the Council and the Health Board to achieving our work effectively and to allow the County's vulnerable inhabitants to live their lives as they choose to live. My aim is to try to get the support of the Cabinet and Council to prioritise this field in the Council's Strategic Plan for the forthcoming years and this would include identifying a number of projects/streams of practical work to try to respond to this challenge that is facing us.