Dear Councillor

**NHS Transformation and the role of Dorset County Council**

Health services in Dorset are facing another reorganisation as part of the “Sustainability and Transformation Plans” (STPs) that every part of England has to produce to show how health and social care will be transformed and money saved over the next five years.

These plans are supposed to build joined up care between health and local government. But the STPs have no formal place in law, so there are concerns about how those responsible for implementing the plans will be held to account. That means councillors like you have a vital job to do in scrutinising local plans and making sure residents know what is going on and have a voice.

As the biggest union of health and care workers in the UK, representing several thousand members in Dorset, UNISON is concerned that these plans are being attempted at a pace and with a lack of money that will render them at best unachievable, and at worst deeply damaging to local services. In Dorset the projected recurrent deficit which needs to be addressed is £229 million by 2020/21.

The Clinical Services Review has already identified options for:

* a single centre for major emergency care
* a single centre for major planned care
* the development of integrated community hubs

As part of these plans to save money, there is an expected 13% reduction in hospital beds despite a forecast increase in demand and a significant reduction of the number of GP practices in rural areas. There is concern that increased travel times to these new centres from across Dorset will put patients at significant risk.

There is no detailed information on how these changes will be achieved and no transitional funding to enable a move to different ways of providing care. At a time when the NHS and adult social care are both creaking under the strain, there is a very real danger that these plans will be used to push through cuts to services in order to meet budget requirements.

Although in Dorset the CSR has been subject to some level of public consultation, the STP which includes changes to adult social care has not yet been subject to consultation. At the very least, the STP should be subject to proper scrutiny by the council’s health overview and scrutiny committee and full debate by the council’s health and wellbeing board. We believe that any implementation plans should be paused until meaningful consultation has taken place with all stakeholders and the NHS and social care funding crisis has been addressed.

Our members working in health and care across Dorset have a right to know what their candidates for council think about the challenges of the STP and how the transformation process will be held publicly to account. Therefore, we are writing to current councillors asking you to answer a number of questions:

1. Do you recognise that the lack of significant additional funding for the NHS places the Dorset STP at risk of failure?
2. As a councillor, will you actively be making the case for new models of care to be fully tested and up and running alongside existing provision of local health services, prior to such services being reduced or withdrawn as part of reconfiguration plans?
3. Will you work to ensure that the emerging Accountable Care Organisation in Dorset commissions existing and new health services on the basis of the NHS as the preferred provider, and on the basis of a fully integrated and public owned system of health and social care?

Please send your response to [darc@unison.co.uk](mailto:darc@unison.co.uk) by 20 April 2017. UNISON will publicise your response to our members who reside and vote in your county division, with “no response” if we do not receive anything by the deadline.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Janine  Miller