



Annual Report
May 2024 – April 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

May 2024 to April 2025 has been another very productive year for our Group, with key achievements and activities including:

- Production and publication of our film about “The Impact of Covid on Dying, Death & Bereavement” and its improved presentation packs. Premier screenings were followed later by successful presentations using the new packs. The film has impact and discussions about it help audiences to recognise the trauma they experienced and to start to address it. This resource is freely available for use and we will continue promoting and using it.
- The film is part of our ongoing contribution to the Mid & South Essex Compassionate Communities Campaign.
- Publication of our independent academic report into “Accessibility to Healthcare Services in SWF, the Dengie & Maldon” showing the barriers to getting to all sorts of healthcare services and starting to advocate for improvements; this includes working with C360 on their scheme for community transport for our area.
- Continuing use of the independent academic “Health, Welfare & Social Care Assessment of the Dengie & South Woodham Ferrers (SWF) Primary Care Network”.
- Our involvement with the consultations about the future for community health services, and the health services recently and presently delivered at St Peter’s Hospital, Maldon, and the decision to repair St Peter’s so it continues to deliver its present outpatients services for up to 5-years whilst a new health centre is created.
- Ongoing involvement in the development of the Dengie & SWF Primary Care Network, providing support to GP treatment services, promoting public health and delivering preventative care.
- Working with the Maldon Central, Dengie & SWF Integrated Neighbourhood Team (INT).
- Bringing Mid Essex Recovery and other health related activities to SWF.
- Playing a leading part in the launch and development of the Mid & South Essex Compassionate Communities Campaign, including its art exhibition.
- Including SWF in the development of the Culture Chelmsford Strategy’s “Improve Health & Wellbeing” strategic theme, the creation of SWF Creatives,
- Campaigning for the re-launch of the shuttle Park & Ride bus from Chelmer Valley to Broomfield Hospital, re-established in August 2024.
- Keeping track of the Lampard Inquiry into Mental Health services in Essex.
- Working through the extreme 2024-25 winter pressures and contributing to planning for 2025-26.

- Contributing to the development of the 10-Year Plan for the NHS.
- Following the announced radical reforms to the NHS, supporting the Mid & South Essex Integrated Care System (ICS) for its final year, contributing to the developments for the Greater Essex ICS, whilst cognisant of the Essex Caring Commission Report and its agenda.
- Keeping SWF informed with selected and edited public health information gathered from national, regional and local authoritative sources, using virtual meetings, website and social media publications, and Focus magazine. Focus is now a monthly publication with limited content space. The need to communicate effectively with people not using digital technology is an increasing potential inequality for everyone involved in welfare services.

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1. Background

South Woodham Ferrers (SWF) Healthcare 2000 Group was formed as a Millennium project in 1999. South Woodham Ferrers Town Council (SWFTC) ran quarterly Care Lunches for many years. The increasing close combination of health and social care by the relevant authorities and organisations was recognised. As a result, as described in the next section, this successor joint organisation was established to enable SWF to mirror that development.

SWF Healthcare 2000 Group had an excellent reputation and ability to engage with all NHS and social care authorities and organisations at the highest, as well as operational, levels. The successor SWF Health & Social Care Group ('the Group') inherited that and built upon it. This continues to give the Group access to, and have the confidence of, the highest-level officials including Councillors holding Cabinet portfolios, Chairs, Non-Executive Directors, Chief Executives and Executive Directors of relevant health and social care authorities and organisations.

As a result, the Group is able to bring top level speakers and information to SWF. One important reason for this is that we are told attendances at our meetings in SWF attract consistently large and good quality audiences. The Group is flexible, adapts to requests from the authorities to fit in with their planning and developmental schedules, holds effective meetings which are purposeful and not held for the sake of meeting. As said later, we have recognised that in person meetings are no longer as popular nor as well attended as in the past and so have moved to other ways to inform and represent the patients, service users and public of SWF in the full range of health, social care and wellbeing issues.

2. Formation & Governance

Proposals for the establishment of the Group were considered as Agenda Item 106 by SWF Town Council (SWFTC) and the agreement to this was Minuted as Item 106 in the Minutes of SWFTC's Meeting held on 19 April 2016.

The Inaugural Public General Meeting of the Group was held on 28 June 2016. That meeting adopted the Group's Governance, which has been slightly updated at the 2017, 2018, 2021 and 2023 AGMs.

- Appendix 1 is the present Governance document of the Group.
- Appendix 2 is the Role Descriptions for the Group's Officers.
- Appendix 3 is the Role Description for the Group's Administrator.
- Appendix 4 is the Group's financial report for the last year.
- Appendix 5 is the Group's website, social media and newsletter data.

Our Organisation

South Woodham Ferrers Health & Social Care Group (“the Group”) was established to look after the health and social care interests of the people of South Woodham Ferrers, recognising the roles of health and social care related professionals, volunteers and the Patient Participation Groups of the GP Practices. The Group incorporates a Task Force, which convenes when consultation or representation is required to consider major health and social care issues affecting the Town; it includes members from all constituencies in the Town. The Group is open to anyone who lives, works, has a local need to access health and social care, or is involved in health and social care in SWF.

It has been clear from the work carried out during the establishment of the Crouch Vale Medical Centre (CVMC), opened in November 2019, that a closer relationship between the Group and the Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) has many benefits. Working together enabled several significant improvements to the original plan. As the demarcation lines between General Practice and other Primary Care Services has become increasingly blurred, it is important that our close collaboration is maintained. Additionally, the COVID-19 Pandemic emphasised the need for Social Care to be integrated with traditional Primary Care and this gives rise to challenges for both groups.

Primary Care Networks (PCNs) were formed in 2019, with SWF being placed in the Dengie & SWF PCN. Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) were established during 2023 and are being developed. Our INT covers Central Maldon, the Dengie and SWF. This is in the context of the Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) set up in July 2022, taking over from Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). SWF is in the Mid & South Essex (MSE) ICS. The Mid Essex Alliance/Place, the geographical area below the ICS made up of the Braintree, Chelmsford and Maldon Districts, is where “most of the work to join up planning and service delivery for routine health and care services (particularly community-based services) will happen.” INTs will bring together multi-disciplinary professionals from the different health and care services to work harmoniously in a joined-up way. The Dengie & SWF PCN sprang into life in April 2023 with the recruitment of its staff.

The MSE Integrated Care Board (ICB) is the statutory authority commissioning all NHS services. It is also responsible for the MSE Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) which “brings together a full range of partners including local authorities and voluntary and community organisations. The ICP is responsible for producing an integrated care strategy on how to meet the health and wellbeing needs of the population in the ICS area. The ICP will play a central role at system level in tackling health inequalities.”

Do hope that’s helped explain the way our healthcare is organised now! We do, and as always, aim to get the best from the system as possible so the patients, service users and people of SWF and surrounds get smooth treatment and service pathways. The recently announced changes to the NHS and its 10-Year Plan will alter things and new arrangements for the Greater Essex ICS will come into effect in April 2026.

3. Report

On 29 August 2024, the Group held our AGM virtually. This is fully reported on our website.

In September 2024 we reported (to SWF Town Council which publishes these reports as agenda items for its Events, Community & Leisure Committee) that:

**Report to South Woodham Ferrers Town Council
For Events Community & Leisure Committee Meeting on 3rd September 2024**

Since our last Report for 9th July 2024 the Group has progressed the marketing of the film entitled “The Impact of Covid on Dying, Death and Bereavement”. After the county-wide showings, the film was sent to the UK Covid Enquiry. The film is now available for anyone to see via the link on the HSCG website and for free uses. There has been good feedback from people dealing with the long-term effects of losing loved ones to Covid.

The HSCG continues to press for the services currently provided at St Peters, to be made available locally should St Peter’s close. We await publication of the final report of the consultation findings when all the corrections to the draft have been incorporated. An extraordinary Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board meeting is planned for 30th September when decisions will be made. However, that may be delayed by any Government intervention, as requested by our MP and Dame Priti Patel.

The HSCG is currently preparing for our AGM which was postponed by the pre- and post-election periods and is now scheduled for this Thursday 29th August at 18.30. This will incorporate our annual report which will be presented to you and the Town Council as previously. It is a virtual meeting and details have been publicised. Following the AGM there will be shown a recorded interview with Tracy Dowling, recent Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board, where she speaks of what she found about the state of our local health service, what changes have been made and how she sees a future with funding difficulties.

The Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccination programme will be rolled out locally to the eligible cohorts over the next few weeks. These are persons aged 75-79 and pregnant women.

As always the Chairman has been attending various meetings and asking pertinent questions of the people running our local health and social services.

The Group has continued to publish a weekly article on its website home page. This has alerted the readers to the continuing progress of a number of infectious conditions. It has informed them also of the continuing progress of the effects of the industrial actions and how these reflect locally. We also distribute a weekly newsletter which draws attention to all items we have published in the previous week; please let us know if you’d like to subscribe for this if you don’t already.

We attach our Annual Report and Appendices for your consideration. We ask your Committee to accept and endorse our Annual Report and Appendices, and that you duly present it to the full Council with your recommendation they also accept and commend it. We also welcome any comments you may have about it and suggestions for our work during the present year and longer-term future.

In October 2024 we reported:

Report to South Woodham Ferrers Town Council For Events Community & Leisure Committee Meeting on 8 October 2024

Since our last Report for the meeting not held on 3 September 2024 there have been the following significant developments:

Following our independent academic assessment of the **SWF & Dengie Primary Care Network (PCN)** published in June 2023, the PCN’s development has gone on with pace. Our report formed the basis of the PCN’s initial agenda and it now has great understanding of the six individual GP Practices and of SWF’s and the Dengie’s communities. It has clinical and operational directors, a manager, digital lead, clinical pharmacist, 5 first contact physiotherapists, 3 emergency care practitioners, a health and wellbeing coach, 4 care coordinators and 3 social prescribers. These

practitioners support many patients of our GPs with their prevention and treatment specialist skills. This is a tremendous boost to our care that's arrived during the last year.

From September 2024 **Kingsway Practice** has changed the way **appointments** can be booked. Calls are taken from 8am Monday to Friday and there's no need to call back at 1pm for appointments in the afternoon. All calls for appointments or queries or requests for home visits or medical certificates etc will have a triage slot for their clinical team to review and deal with appropriately. This could mean callers get a call back from a clinician, are navigated to a different pathway like the local pharmacy first service or are asked to attend later on the same day for a face to face appointment.

To make the triage appointments work reception staff will be asking some questions when people either call or attend the surgery to book an appointment. These questions help the clinical team deal with each patient efficiently so they do not have to ask you to repeat the information given to the reception staff.

Art Exhibition to celebrate Living, Caring, and Dying – 3rd September to 3rd November 2024, at the Ideas Hub in The Meadows, Chelmsford, opened by the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, is the first of hopefully many activities for the Mid and South Essex Compassionate Communities Campaign (MSE CCC) in which we play a full part. The exhibition showcases the incredible artwork of over 28 different local artists, including two from SWF, around the theme of "Celebrating Living, Caring and Dying." Our Chair chaired the selection panel. These unique pieces are the creative expression of very personal experience, important reflections, and stories, that we would like to share with the public to help our communities to openly embrace discussions around dying, death and loss as a normal part of life.

To celebrate the launch of SWF Leisure Centre's newly refurbished **Multi-Use Games Area**, they've launched two brand new Netball courses for both juniors and adults, plus Pickleball Play and Play sessions!

NHS chiefs agree delay to final decision on community hospital changes

The NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (MSEICB) has announced a six-month delay in the final decision-making regarding the reconfiguration of community hospital beds, a midwife-led birthing unit and ambulatory care services.

The decision follows an extensive public consultation, where valuable feedback was gathered from patients, staff, and the wider community.

The delay aims to allow further engagement to ensure the final decision is fully informed and aligns with the needs of the local population.

To ensure that the final decision reflects a broad range of perspectives, an independently chaired working group will be established to support looking at viable options in detail, including the long-term future of services provided at St Peter's Hospital in Maldon.

This group will include representatives from the NHS, local authorities, community organisations, and key stakeholders.

The working group will focus on:

Reviewing feedback: Further analysing the input received during the consultation to explore feasible options for reconfiguring community beds, a midwife-led birthing unit and ambulatory services.

Community and stakeholder engagement: Engaging with stakeholders to co-develop viable solutions that meet local healthcare needs.

Providing recommendations: After the six-month engagement period, the working group will present its recommendations to NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB) for consideration.

A special decision-making board meeting was due to be held on 30 September 2024 but will now be postponed enabling the working group to complete its review.

The delay means there will be no immediate changes to the provision of community hospital beds, midwife-led birthing or ambulatory care services. All current services will continue as they are while the engagement process is ongoing.

The working group will begin in the coming weeks.

We submitted two questions to the recent MSE ICB Board Meeting held in public:

Q: Whether effective communication about the ICB's situation with all communities including South Woodham Ferrers is a priority across the ICB and its Alliances.

A: Thank you for the warm welcome. I'm pleased to be back in MSE, and I appreciate your kind words [Tom Abel, new CEO]. I fully agree with the sentiment expressed by my predecessor regarding the importance of patient and public engagement, especially in challenging times. Transparent, clear communication is essential to maintaining trust and avoiding misunderstandings. I am committed to ensuring that effective communication with all our communities, including South Woodham Ferrers, remains a priority. We will work hard to keep everyone informed about both the challenges we face and the progress we make, fostering an open dialogue across the ICB and its Alliances.

Q: Recognising the widening and increasing transport problems for patients across M&SE, will MSE ICB work with South Woodham Ferrers Health & Social Care Group and other partners to review this issue?

A: The ICB recognises the importance of supporting patients, carers and their families in being able to access health and care services, and welcomes the work undertaken by MSEFT to restore the shuttle bus to Broomfield Hospital and the work undertaken by ECC to replace the services lost by the closure of the Dart and Arrow public transport service. We have noted the strength of feedback around the importance of travel, transport and parking highlighted by those who responded to the public consultation on the future of community services across MSE. We are continuing to consider the response to the consultation and what is needed to respond to the issues raised through it as part of implementation of any potential changes, including those relating to travel and transport. Working in partnership with local authorities, local residents and others will be key to developing those plans in the future. MSE ICB, through the Mid Essex Alliance, is also engaging with the work being led by Essex County Council to consider the infrastructure challenges in the Maldon District – which includes those relating to travel and transport.

Whilst the ICB recognises the importance of good transport links for patients and the public attending health and welfare services, the ICB is not ultimately responsible for public transport. We would be happy to be engaged in any review undertaken by the South Woodham Ferrers Health and Social Care Group and are always committed to working with partners to improve services where possible but how involved we can be would be based upon capacity within teams who are stretched due to the financial recovery programme across the ICB.

Baroness Lampard's **public inquiry into more than 2,000 mental health related deaths** at NHS-run children and adult inpatient units in Essex between 2000 and 2023 opened in Chelmsford. The first three weeks of hearings of commemorative and impact accounts has finished. The next set of hearings will start on 25 November 2024; they will be held remotely, with everyone participating and watching online.

SWF's GPs start **Covid & Flu vaccinations** in October and are delivering RSV vaccinations; all by invitation. Vaccines are a key line of defence for us this winter. The guide to who's eligible for the 2024 flu vaccine is at: <https://swfhealthsocial.co.uk/2024/09/26/your-guide-to-whos-eligible-for-the-2024-flu-vaccine/> . Those eligible for Winter 2024 Covid vaccinations are: adults aged 65 years and over; residents in a care home for older adults; individuals aged 6 months to 64 years in a clinical risk group ([as defined in tables 3 or 4 in the COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book](#)); and, frontline NHS and social care workers, and those working in care homes for older people. The vaccine should usually be offered no earlier than around 6 months after the last vaccine dose. If you

are eligible, you can get protection from an autumn COVID-19 vaccination even if you have not taken up a COVID-19 vaccine offer in the past. Our Group is organising marshalling for Covid & Flu vaccinations at CVMC on Saturdays 5 & 12 October.

The **Patient Participation Groups** for Greenwood and Kingsway surgeries have set up a combined group called **Crouch Vale Medical Centre Patient Group**. This is meeting three monthly, and the next one is scheduled for November. The aims of this group are to provide a patient perspective on all matters affecting the Medical Centre as a whole. The practice specific PPGs are still meeting as before as the two practices are quite separate in their operational activities.

The Chair has just been invited to represent patients and public at a one-day workshop being run by NHS East of England to develop a five-year **regional strategy for** taking on responsibility by the regions' six Integrated Care Boards of 59 **specialised services** previously managed nationally.

In November 2024 we reported:

Report to South Woodham Ferrers Town Council For Events Community & Leisure Committee Meeting on 5 November 2024

Since our last Report for the meeting held on 8 October 2024 there have been the following significant developments:

Focus goes monthly: We're very grateful to **Focus** for keeping going during and after the pandemic. The move to **monthly** issues will make it much harder to keep readers not online up to date with key public health information. We are asking for ideas about how to keep that audience informed.

The Government has launched its national consultation **Change NHS: help build a health service fit for the future**. Full details are at [NHS England » Change NHS: help build a health service fit for the future](#). Everyone is encouraged to contribute and there's an online survey to start this off. In November a 'workshop in a box' will be provided to enable SWF Health & Social Care Group to run our own public engagement event for the Town as part of the consultation's local engagement programme. This is described as a 'once in a generation opportunity to set the NHS on a path for the future'.

By the time of this meeting we'll know what the **Budget** has delivered for the NHS. We continue to work with the Mid & South Essex Integrated Care System and other relevant authorities to make the best of the present situation and the future.

The Chair represented patients, service users and the public at the one-day workshop run by NHS East of England to develop a five-year **regional strategy for** taking on responsibility by the regions' six Integrated Care Boards of 59 **specialised services** previously managed nationally. This was very encouraging in many ways. The executive directors and leaders were very open to the need to put the experience of the patients at the foundation of developments and receptive to our input. There were many good ideas about how to bring specialised services up to date.

Recent reports of **buses** not turning up in **SWF** as timetabled led to people missing hospital appointments. It was heartening to read that some of our District and County Councillors are trying to get other bus services re-routed to include SWF.

You'll recall from our last report the question we asked of Mid & South Essex Integrated Care Board (MSE ICB) about transport issues. We have now put together, in conjunction with MSE ICB, another **application to Warwick Medical School for a Masters research project to look into accessibility issues** of concern facing the patients and people of the Maldon Central, Dengie & SWF Integrated Neighbourhood Team (INT)'s area in reaching health services. This reflects that

accessibility was the most serious concern identified by our previous assessment of the Dengie & SWF Primary Care Network (PCN) and the concerns expressed so strongly in the consultation about the future of community health services and St Peter's Hospital. We very much hope our application will be successful.

Again we hosted a recent meeting of the patient and public leaders with staff of the **Dengie & SWF PCN** which explored a lot of important issues. There was a presentation about our INT; we had a detailed update on the PCN staffing and roles; we will be collaborating with steps to improve the involvement of the PPGs for the GP Practices and for the engagement with the PCN as a whole. We will be extending the reach of this to include the leaders of the Patient Participation groups of the two Central Maldon GP Practices as they will be integral to the accessibility research project.

In February 2025 we reported:

Report to South Woodham Ferrers Town Council For Events Community & Leisure Committee Meeting on 11 February 2025

Since our last Report for the meeting held on 5th November 2024 there have been the following significant developments:

We have been particularly active in alerting people to the major winter pressures on the NHS. This has included the data relating to the increased number of flu cases and the high numbers of Covid, RSV and Norovirus. We have described in our newsletters the impact that these winter diseases have been having on hospital admissions and the ambulance service. We have tried to exhort people eligible for the appropriate vaccines to take up the services provided. We have also informed people about the appropriate way to access health services.

As we forewarned you last time the Focus magazine has changed to a monthly issue. We have continued to have a good relationship with the proprietors of the magazine and we have negotiated a regular spot for our summarised newsletter. There remains the problem of getting urgent communications to those members of the public who do not access electronic communications.

On 9th January we had a very informative and encouraging meeting with Tom Abell who is the CEO of the Mid & South Essex Integrated Care Board. This was a small group involving officers of HSCG and a representative from the Dengie patient groups. Mr Abell was able to offer some insights into how he saw health in the area might change in the short and long term. He also offered to speak with us again in the future extending the audience to our Task Force which includes some Councillors.

At the last meeting of the ECLC we advised about the Government's launch of its national consultation **Change NHS: help build a health service fit for the future**. Full details are at [NHS England » Change NHS: help build a health service fit for the future](#). Everyone is encouraged to contribute and there's an online survey. HSCG submitted comments by the deadline of early December for organisations, highlighting problems of accessibility and the aftermath of frontline staff experiences of deaths during the pandemic and suggested potential solutions. Unfortunately the 'workshop in a box' for Mid & South Essex to facilitate our own public engagement event for the Town as part of the consultation's local engagement programme was only provided in January. As a consequence of our Chairman's illness and preparations for going into hospital, it has not been possible to set up a workshop in SWF in the foreseeable future but maybe later in the year.

We are very pleased to report the success of our **application to Warwick Medical School for a Masters research project to look into accessibility issues** of concern facing the patients and

people of the Maldon Central, Dengie & SWF Integrated Neighbourhood Team (INT)'s area in reaching health services. This reflects that accessibility was the most serious concern identified by our previous assessment of the Dengie & SWF Primary Care Network (PCN) and the concerns expressed so strongly in the consultation about the future of community health services and St Peter's Hospital. As a Christmas present we were advised of the success of the application and a student named Emily has been assigned to the new project. She is currently familiarising herself with our 2023 report which is the starting point for her work.

We are constantly in touch with the patient and public leaders with staff of the **Dengie & SWF PCN** exploring a lot of important issues. We will continue to collaborate in steps to improve the involvement of the PPGs for the GP Practices and for the engagement with the PCN as a whole. We have extended the reach of this to include the leaders of the Patient Participation Groups of the two Central Maldon GP Practices as they will be integral to the accessibility research project. Our Chairman continues to be involved in meetings across the NHS which directly impact on our local NHS. His involvement will be severely restricted over the next couple of months as he recovers from his planned surgery. However it is his intention to continue to be involved electronically after his operation and the newsletters will be produced with the minimum of interruption.

You may have heard that there were problems at the Village Pharmacy at the beginning of the New Year when prescriptions were unable to be fulfilled. This was an administrative problem which we are pleased to report has been successfully resolved and normal service has been resumed.

HSCG has also just been successful in gaining a small grant to fund development of resources for the use of our film 'The Impact of Covid on Dying, Death & Bereavement' and promote its use as a cultural asset to make differences in health and wellbeing.

A similar small grant has been awarded to SWF Community Hub to encourage new cultural activities which will deliver health benefits.

In May 2025 we reported:

Report to South Woodham Ferrers Town Council For Events Community & Leisure Committee Meeting on 20th May 2025

Since our last Report for the meeting held on 11th February 2025 there have been the following significant developments:

We have continued to be particularly active in alerting people to the major winter pressures on the NHS. This has included the data relating to the increased number of flu, Covid and RSV cases which all reached record heights. We have described in our newsletters the impact that these winter diseases have been having on hospital admissions and the ambulance service. We have also tried to exhort people eligible for the appropriate vaccines to take up the services provided. It is pleasing to report that flu, Covid and RSV cases have dropped to the levels expected at this time of year. Norovirus cases on the other hand are still at their highest, being way above the average of the last five years for the same period.

Reducing immunity because of low uptake of all vaccinations is dangerous. Patients and public cannot moan about the NHS but not do what they should to keep themselves as healthy as possible. The other most serious threat at present is the growing antibiotic resistance. Antibiotics should not be taken for colds and flu, should only be taken when prescribed and should not be saved for future use.

The work of the Warwick University Medical School's assigned student has proceeded at pace and she is due to report at the end of the month. The main thrust of the work on accessibility has been through an online survey which we have been pressing people to complete. We were also able to run two Focus Groups, one involving the patient perspective and the other the perspective of service providers. Publication of the report of this project is scheduled for the end of May/early June.

Our report will inform the considerations about the future of St Peter's Hospital, Maldon. The Working Group **Recommendations for Community Health Services** include investing to keep **St Peter's Hospital, Maldon** operational for five years while funding is assembled for a purpose-built new facility, ideally on the current site. This will maintain all existing outpatient, investigative and therapy services. The NHS cannot efficiently operate **Inpatient Care** in Maldon due to low utilisation. **Stroke and Birthing Services** will be consolidated as near as possible. Decisions will be made in the coming months.

These recommendations mirror the ones we made when we gave our evidence to the public consultation meeting in March 2024. It is disappointing that there is a five-year time line to deliver a local facility for outpatient investigations and consultations.

In the latter part of March the Crouch Vale Patients Champion Group held two open days at the Health Centre. This Group comprises members of the Patient Participation Groups of both Kingsway and Greenwood surgeries. The objective of this work was a recruitment exercise to attract new members. The opportunity was taken for the volunteers to ask patients to complete a simple survey. It will be interesting to see how the results of this survey compare with those of the Warwick project albeit that the population surveyed was smaller. It was gratifying that 90% of the patients were prepared to take five minutes to complete the survey on their way out of the Health Centre.

We are constantly in touch with the patient and public leaders with staff of the **Dengie & SWF PCN** exploring a lot of important issues. We will continue to collaborate in steps to improve the involvement of the PPGs for the GP Practices and for the engagement with the PCN as a whole. We continue also to extend the reach of this to include the leaders of the Patient Participation Groups of the two Central Maldon GP Practices as they are integral to the accessibility research project.

The demise of NHS England, devolution of Greater Essex and radical reform of the Integrated Care Systems is having an enormous impact. Mid & South Essex (MSE) Integrated Care Board (ICB) has to reduce its spending by 50% by October 2025 (mainly impacting staff numbers and responsibilities), It will then merge possibly to cover all of Greater Essex and with reduced responsibilities for commissioning local NHS services. The Department of Health & Social Care will maintain a regional office for the East of England which amongst other things will monitor the ICBs and performance of the service providers.

A micro grant has been used to develop presentation packs for our film "The Impact of Covid on Dying, Death & Bereavement" and this has then been trialled. The trial screenings have been very successful and so we will be promoting this further in the coming months. One of the presentation packs accompanies this report as an example. Councillors and staff are welcome to use this freely should any opportunities arise.

Our Chairman has resumed his involvement in meetings across the NHS which directly impact on our local NHS after his recovery from surgery. The newsletters have been produced continuously in electronic format during his convalescence.

We have asked the following questions of the MSE ICB for its meeting in public on 15 May:

1. The focus group we held as part of the independent academic research we are undertaking into accessibility for patients travelling to health appointments, treatments, diagnostics and

operations suggests that the authorities responsible for highways, public transport and delivery of the services at general and specialist hospitals do not pay any particular attention to this. Does MSE ICB agree that it is pointless for patients to have such appointments but be unable to attend them either without considerable difficulties or not at all because of travel barriers?

2. The patients and people of South Woodham Ferrers have seen reports of cuts to NHS England ring fenced budgets which will see **maternity, prevention, mental health and children's services** suffering the biggest cuts according to the HSJ, the health service journal for healthcare leaders. The rest of the money will instead be given to the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). So what will you, our Mid & South Essex ICB, do with this funding? We know our midwifery services aren't as good as they should be. Our mental health services are subject to a public inquiry. Our children's special needs services are the worst in the country, and we know prevention will lower serious illnesses.
3. The Report from the Commission into St Peter's Hospital and associated options with care beds and birthing unit pathways across Mid & South Essex recommends, inter alia: ".... rapid investment and support into St Peters to keep all outpatients services at the hospital over, roughly, the next 5 years. This will allow the time for the capital to be brought together to redevelop a part of the estate for a modern health hub, where primary care and possibly other services will be brought within and upgraded." Given the historic delays this seems 'like another delaying tactic' especially as that takes the issue beyond the next General Election. Recognising the present reorganisations and financial constraints please will you ensure that a full business case is developed, agreed and financed within three years?

Other things:

- Thanks to our invaluable Administrator Nikki Boreham. Nikki manages our website, social media and communications to great effect. This enables us to provide crucial public health and welfare information. The statistics for the last year are in Appendix 5.
- In addition, we are now answering around 150 enquiries per annum about health and social care issues and services.
- Other important issues on our horizon remain:
 - The reorganisation of the NHS, creation of the Greater Essex ICS, increased role of NHS East of England and devolution for Greater Essex;
 - Links with Culture Chelmsford and its priority of developing the link between culture and health;
 - Increasing health related activities at the SWF Community Hub;
 - The future of community health services and those services recently and presently delivered at St Peter's Hospital, Maldon;
 - The UK Covid-19 Inquiry;
 - The public inquiry into the mental health services in Essex;
 - The use of our film about "The Impact of Covid on Dying, Death & Bereavement";
 - Bringing more health related activities to the Town including for mental health, isolation, dementia and public health;
 - the impact on Primary Care, Social Care, our local hospitals and other welfare services of the Chelmsford City Council Local Plan, with its overall proposal for 20,000+ new houses to be built during the life of the Plan, with 1000+ of them in SWF, developments by Maldon District Council, and other such developments in our surrounds; and,
 - the possible development of Bradwell B nuclear power station.

Health, Social Care & Wellbeing

Our local GP services are of huge significance but there are also very many other health and social care services much used and needed by SWF people. In no particular order in the last year this Group has engaged in and with:

- Chelmsford CVS (Council for Voluntary Service)
- Livewell Chelmsford
- Chelmsford Cultural Strategy
- Mid Essex Alliance/Place
- Mid & South Essex Integrated Care System
- Mid & South Essex Integrated Care Board
- Mid & South Essex Integrated Care Partnership
- Mid & South Essex Compassionate Communities Campaign
- Mid & South Essex NHS Foundation Trust (managing our three local acute hospitals)
- Essex Healthwatch
- Essex County Council Public Health & Community Engagement
- Essex County Council Social Services
- Essex Cares
- Essex Partnership University Trust – provider of mental health services
- Broomfield Hospital Trauma Unit

Group representatives have attended, engaged with, been involved with and/or contributed to:

- Mid Essex Area Community Engagement (MACE)
- Mid & South Essex Voluntary, Community, Faith & Social Enterprise (VCFSE) Assembly
- SWF pharmaceutical matters
- SWF dental matters
- SWF ophthalmology services including opticians
- East of England Ambulance which serves SWF
- Carers' services including with Essex County Council, Carers First and Action for Family Carers
- Chetwood Healthy Family Delivery Site, part of Chelmsford Central Family Hub
- Some Accessibility & Disabled People's services including Chelmsford Area Accessibility Group
- Bereavement and Death Matters
- SWF Foodbank
- Social Prescribing
- CQC (Care Quality Commission) re various health and social care regulatory issues and their voluntary & community involvement
- ARU (Anglia Ruskin University) Patient Partnership group supporting training of medical students
- UK, Eastern Region and Essex Acquired Brain Injury Fora.

In response to requests from the local media, ie newspapers, radio and regional tv stations, officers have made personal contributions to reports, discussions and items about various health & social care issues. We are grateful to SW Focus who publish our articles.

By invitation, the Chair is the Chair of Trauma East Voices, the patient & public engagement group for the East of England Major Trauma Network. In that capacity he has, inter alia, promoted the

provision of support for families and friends of major trauma patients; is promoting the review of, maintenance of and increase in rehabilitation resources; is working with regional rehabilitation coordinators, rehabilitation service providers, social care providers, public health authorities, planning authorities, NHS & Department of Health and university researchers.

The Group's Chair represents SWF on the Livewell Chelmsford Group. Livewell Chelmsford has multi-agency and organisational membership and is linked to Mid Essex Alliance, Essex Public Health and to the Essex Health & Wellbeing Board.

Its main roles are to:

- Be a decision-making body in respect of setting and delivering small projects including the funding of such
- Be a locality group to inform the Mid Essex Alliance and ECC of local health and wellbeing issues, and translate Mid-Essex and countywide initiatives into local action, and
- Be a forum for disseminating and discussing information relevant to partners.

The Group's Chair is also chair of the Access Stakeholder Group for the Essex E-Scooter Trials.

As required and requested, the Group liaises with local health service providers, our MP and SWF's local authority Councillors about individual and generic issues of concern/interest to them.

4. Our Organisation & Future Activities

This Group has run since 1999 and in that time has delivered benefits and ensured that SWF is heard and represented about a wide range of health and social care issues. This has been delivered entirely by voluntary time and effort. Succession and sustainability is required. If SWF values this and wants it to continue then fresh people need to join and contribute please.

This is a critical time. A radical reorganisation of the NHS, the 10-year NHS Plan and devolution will have major effects in the next year and beyond.

The most important activities for the coming months are expected to include:

- Continuing to use our independent academic report into "Accessibility to Healthcare Services in SWF, the Dengie & Maldon" to show the barriers to getting to all sort of healthcare services and advocate for improvements; this includes working with C360 on their scheme for community transport for our area.
- Working with MSE ICS and the shadow Greater Essex ICS, to maintain services whilst developing for the future;
- Exploring a next research project to undertake in conjunction with the Warwick Medical School Masters' Public Health Pathway programme;
- Lobbying and working to use our accessibility report to inform consideration of ways to improve the ability of patients and carers to access health services;
- Maintain our involvement about the future of community health services and the future of St Peter's Hospital, Maldon;
- Promotion of our film about the impact of Covid and the restrictions caused by it on dying, death and bereavement;
- Continuing using our Report about healthcare services in the Dengie & SWF Primary Care Network;
- Contributing to Chelmsford Cultural Strategy's development of its Culture & Health strategic theme and ensure SWF and ruralities are fully included in this project;
- Contribute to development of the Mid & South Essex Compassionate Communities Campaign; and,

- Contribute to the development of a VCFSE Assembly for Greater Essex, in the context of the Essex Caring Communities Commission's 2025 Report, particularly to include SWF and other local communities.

We welcome comments and suggestions now and in the coming months about our activities as they are and as people would like them to be.

5. Officers & contact details

Chair: Peter Blackman
 Task Force Chair: David Birch
 Minutes Secretary: Jackie Birch
 Administrator: Nikki Boreham
 Contact details:
 Email: swfhealthsocial@outlook.com
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6. Recommendations & Request

We commend the work of the Group and this Report to SWF Town Council (SWFTC) and the people of South Woodham Ferrers.

We request that our virtual AGM in September 2025 adopts this Report and SWFTC considers and accepts this Report at a subsequent meeting.

As far as possible, the Group has delivered value for money. The remaining funds will enable the Group to continue its work in representing the Townsfolk about all levels and types of health and social care as they affect and apply to the patients, service users and population of SWF.

The Group requests continuation of SWFTC's support and in due course further funding towards its future administration. We will continue to consult and keep everyone advised of developments, progress and future arrangements. Other sources of ongoing support will be explored.

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