

MARTLESHAM SURGERY - PRACTICE & PATIENT GROUP (PPG) NEWS OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2020

In July 2019, I reported on the rumours about Martlesham Heath surgery closing with GP services being run from The Birches practice in Kesgrave. We invited the local Clinical Commissioning Group to a PPG meeting to explain to us what impact they expected the new housing developments to have on the future of primary care. They told us that any decisions were many years off being decided, but that various options were being considered. This summer, the same rumours are out there, so this is to explain our current understanding.

In 2018/19, both the Martlesham Heath practice and The Birches joined a consortium of 13 GP practices across Suffolk called Suffolk Primary Care (SPC). The consortium describes itself as *"An innovative new partnership with like-minded Suffolk GP surgeries covering 130,000 patients. The collaboration will see doctors and other practice staff sharing resources and working together to ensure patients continue to receive high quality healthcare."* The way this consortium operates is that there is a management board and some back-office functions have been centralised, including management of the website, but each practice continues to operate independently within the overall structure. Since the Martlesham and Kesgrave surgeries are located near each other, a closer collaboration has evolved between the two and this was particularly necessary during the lockdown, when one operated as a Covid site and the other as a non-Covid site. We also now share a practice manager who works half the week at each location.

We are very grateful to Paul Brown, CEO of SPC for attending our last two PPG meetings, as we remain concerned about the future of our practice in relation to the future housing developments. He advised us that closer collaboration between Martlesham and Kesgrave practices will continue, but no decisions have been made on longer-term arrangements. The options we heard before are still there. These include:

- retaining both practices to cater for increasing demand
- looking at options to expand one or both premises
- creating a single larger practice on one site, not necessarily an existing site.

From what we heard from the CCG and again recently, it seems very unlikely that a brand new medical centre will be built at Brightwell Lakes, as it would be more cost effective to build up the existing practices. However, we can't say for certain that won't ever happen.

Right now, we have been assured that there are no plans to close Martlesham Heath surgery, the Birches practice in Kesgrave is not taking over or amalgamating with the Martlesham Heath surgery, but the two practices are working together more closely in order to share resources when that is helpful. We don't yet know how this situation will evolve over the next 3-5 years. On behalf of all our patients, we will maintain an active interest and participate in discussions about this and will let you know when we know anything more definite.

In the light of closer collaboration, I am now in touch with my opposite number at The Birches and have agreed that we will share information and maybe collaborate on projects where this would save duplication of effort. We are planning to conduct a patient survey in December (hopefully) and you will be invited to give us feedback on various communication methods for patients. Although the survey will be conducted together, the results will be analysed separately, so each practice will see the results for their patients. Our PPG is leading on this project.

If you have any questions for our PPG, please contact me at MartPPG@gmx.co.uk

Chair Martlesham PPG