

Question:

We know that Wixams as a whole meets the defined criteria for a GP Practice as supported by the evidence attached. Can you please explain how the ICB will now deliver the Wixams GP practice, with support from BBC and CBC funding, and that the annual running costs will be funded by BLMK ICB? Additionally, can you assure us that work can start on constructing the practice building within the next 12 months, and it will open in January 2025?

Public Question, Barbara Matthews, Wixams Surgery Action Group

Answer (responded at 8.12.23 Board in Public):

Response from BLMK ICB (Dean Westcott, Chief Finance Officer)

- This is an important question which I will answer as the ICB Executive with responsibility for estates in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes.
- We understand the strength of feeling in Wixams about access to healthcare, and in particular the absence of a GP surgery within Wixams itself. We know this leads to residents having to travel outside of Wixams to see a healthcare professional, often to Bedford, Wootton, Great Denham and Ampthill.
- This morning, the Chief Executive and I met residents from the Wixams to take receipt of a petition entitled “Fund a Wixams GP Surgery now” – and my answer today should also be taken as the ICB’s response to this. We will be having further conversations with the Wixams Surgery Action Group to discuss the petition, and also to correct some inaccuracies made in the evidence submitted to us about how new primary care premises are funded.
- It remains the stated ambition of the ICB to establish a primary care facility in the centre of Wixams. A key first step is to secure planning permission for the facility and we are continuing to work with the developer on this. However, even where there is clear demand for a facility, we must ensure that both the construction and the ongoing running costs of such a facility are affordable. This is not the case at the current time and we are therefore unable to commit to having a new healthcare premises available by 2025.

- In the meantime, we are taking action to improve primary care capacity in the surgeries on which Wixams residents currently rely. This includes recruiting more GPs and other expert clinicians, investing in the extension and improvement of premises where it is cost-effective to do so, growing the number of appointments available in primary care, introducing Cloud-Based Telephony to support patients' experience of calling practices at peak times, supporting more health services to be delivered in pharmacies and exploring the feasibility of temporary healthcare premises.



**Bedfordshire, Luton
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Integrated Care Board

- *Key ICB partners - Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council and the NHS - are working closely together to seek a viable financial solution for the community. Our recent, productive discussions have focused on ways we could potentially bridge the gap in capital funding. We will update residents and their representatives again in the New Year. Thank you.*