

**Report / Draft Minutes - Hawes High Abbotside Parish Council  
Meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> October @ Gayle Institute @ 7.15 pm**

**PC Agenda Item 4b**

**Cutbacks in the provision of Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) Patient Transport to hospitals in the region, implemented along with a new stricter telephone interrogation of need routine being used by its PTS controllers, introduced without any consultation by the HRW Clinical Commissioning Group and YAS from October 1<sup>st</sup> – The Chairman to request support from the Parish Council for his Notice of Motion to Richmondshire District Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> October calling for the suspension of the cutbacks until local consultation has taken place.**

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**PC Discussion / Debate**

The Chairman, Councillor John Blackie explained the background to the situation using his correspondence, both his and the HRW CCG press releases, and the last minute response from Janet Probert, received 1 hour before the meeting itself. He then invited comments from both the Councillors and the 45 members of the public attending.

All present were appalled at the lack of any consultation by the HRG CCG and the Yorkshire Ambulance Service especially as a community placed furthest in North Yorkshire from the hospitals it is served by, the cutbacks would have a disproportionately detrimental and costly impact. There was the clearest atmosphere of deep anxiety amongst some of the contributors who have needed, because of their personal circumstances and / or medical conditions, Patient Transport Services (PTS) to get them to and from hospital who now doubted whether it will be offered to them in the future.

The concerns were best illustrated by a very emotionally moving contribution from Barry Wilcox, a lifelong resident of Hawes who has suffered from cerebral palsy at birth, but who had borne this disability with great fortitude, working for the RAF at Catterick until retirement, and then financing his own specially adapted house for himself in Hawes now he is in his 70s, and for his mother Elsie, to live independently yet together. Barry explained he had very often been able to use the PTS services for himself to get to / from hospitals in the past, without any problem, as his condition meant he had never been able to drive other than a mobility scooter.

His mother now needed PTS assistance as she is 97 years of age and virtually blind so he recently rang up PTS and found there was a new approach and atmosphere to the conversation. He described a barrage of intimidating interrogation from a YAS PTS controller based in Wakefield who at first refused to offer a PTS service to get his mother and himself to The Friarage Hospital. The Controller was aware of his condition and the age and infirmity of his mother in refusing his request. Fortunately he stood his ground and in the end he was allocated a PTS vehicle although he is concerned for the next time he calls for PTS assistance. Barry thanked Cllr. Blackie and the Parish Council for taking up the concerns of the many individuals in the local community and highlighting them in the public domain.

Some people in the audience who know Barry and Elsie very well were moved to tears hearing the struggle he had to endure to get a NHS service they desperately needed and had always been offered in the past. There were shouts of disgraceful amongst the audience and everybody present

were appalled at the insensitivity of PTS interrogation presumably sanctioned by the HRW CCG and YAS.

Another patient who has had a liver transplant, Rob Ward, and needs to visit the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle (75 miles away from Hawes) every 6 months said when asking for a PTS car to go to / from the Hospital was told to take the train. He explained that trains had ceased to run through Hawes in 1954 to which the reply was to take a bus.

It was pointed out that the National criteria now being used by HRW CCG / YAS did not take account of the deep rurality of the Upper Dales, including the distances involved, the costs, and the difficulties getting to hospitals by bus.

A former YAS employee of some years standing who had worked on Emergency Ambulances said it was common knowledge amongst employees that the PTS service was being allowed by the YAS Management to go into a spiral of increasing decline because of the lack of funding. He said the problem lay with Central Government not allocating sufficient funding to keep the service going.

The £20 cap on the cost of voluntary car service contained in the last minute e-mail from Janet Probert was noted but it was pointed out that this amount may be beyond the financial means of some PTS patients and if the appointment at the hospital was an extended clinic or consultation it would be £40 to cover the trip there and the return. This could sink below the waterline the household finances of a patient regularly having to attend hospital. None of these considerations have been taken into account as there has been no consultation with the local communities. It appeared the HRW CCG did not think this was a major change requiring consultation.

It certainly is, one Councillor observed, if you cannot afford the alternative means of getting to / from hospital when in the past you have been able to use the PTS service. The simple fact is that this will lead to some patients not being able to attend the clinics and consultations they should be attending, to address their medical condition.

### **Resolution – Hawes & High Abbotside Parish Council**

*The Parish Council resolved unanimously to express its deep concerns about the changes to the availability of the PTS service to patients and the apparently intimidating interrogation of those applying to use the service. It calls upon the HRW CCG and YAS to consult with the local community about the changes, and until that has taken place they should be suspended. It requested the resolution be forwarded to Richmondshire District Council to support the Notice of Motion put forward by Cllr. John Blackie at its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.*

### **Notice of Motion listed for debate on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October at Richmondshire DC**

#### **Councillor John Blackie proposes:**

“This Council believes the community of healthcare provision must be based upon the needs of an individual so it is deeply concerned to read of the cutbacks in the assistance given to patients to attend a hospital clinic as provided by the Yorkshire Ambulance Service Patient Transport Services (PTS) and commissioned by the Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby (HRW) Clinical Commissioning Group.

The cutbacks have a disproportionate impact that falls most heavily on patients in rural communities like all those throughout Richmondshire placed furthest from the hospitals that serve them, and it notes with dismay there has been no consultation whatsoever before they have been implemented on October 1st.

It calls upon the HRW Clinical Commissioning Group and the Yorkshire Ambulance Service to attend a meeting of a Scrutiny Committee or the Corporate Board at Richmondshire District Council to explain the changes it has made, whilst hearing of the anxieties they have caused amongst patients, and until this meeting has taken place to suspend their implementation.”

**John Blackie**