

The answer to your eight questions are as follows:-

1. Both David and Annie Brenton are totally opposed to the 'Wider Devon Sustainability and Transformation Plan'. If elected as County Councillors, we would question the Cabinet Member for Health and Well-being Scrutiny and table motions opposing STP. We would also lobby and do all in our power to influence central government to increase finance and support to the NHS at local and national level.
2. We both believe that it is totally wrong to sacrifice our local NHS Services to fund deficits elsewhere. If elected, we would both work and lobby for improved local funding for the NHS and a more realistic understanding of the problems of NHS Services provision and access in remote rural areas. We would call for more representative people on the Boards of our local Health Trusts, to ensure that Patient Groups and interests were properly involved in decisions at Board level - not just financial management at any cost, considerations.
3. We believe this policy is disastrous and will decimate our local NHS Services. Our area has a higher than average elderly population and this more than accounts for the slightly above average bed ratio. We constantly receive complaints from constituents whose health is deteriorating due to longer waits for medical or surgical treatment.
4. We consider 'Care Closer to Home' to be completely inadequate and unfit for purpose. There is a problem recruiting suitable clinically trained staff and we know of many instances where people have not received the care they needed on discharge from hospital and have spent weeks without any support. The cuts to Social Care Provision have made this situation worse.
5. The latest system of Governance in the NHS allows individual Trust Boards (mainly composed of unrepresentative commercial interests), to take decisions which have no democratic validity and are often against the public interest. The situation with the 8th December 2016 vote, demonstrates this and how far these Trusts' decisions are from the will of the democratic majority. In order to re-introduce democracy within local Health Services, we must return to a system more truly representative of the local community. We must have patients groups, health groups and elected members on Health Trust Boards.
6. During the debate the contradiction between these drastic cuts and the welfare of the community was continually demonstrated. The biased nature of the assessments and reviews in favour of purely financial interests was exposed and the lack of sound evidence to support STP was obvious. The methods used to 'consult' the public was condemned as manipulative and undemocratic. There was condemnation of the brief 'consultation' period and the dictatorial way meetings were conducted. We believe there were also questions raised about the fact that some of those involved in the imposition of the STP may have shares or interests in private health companies which are in direct competition to the NHS, and had a vested interest in imposing the STP on our Community Health Service.
7. The Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee has been unable to fulfil its remit, because it does not have adequate statutory powers to do so. It is virtually a mere advisory body which can demonstrate concerns, ask for information and make resolutions - but has "no teeth" to enforce any of its decisions. There is at present a complete absence of community involvement in the planning and management of our local Health Services. However great or relevant local needs and concerns are; they are not addressed at Board or Commissioning level.
8. All our campaign literature puts the local NHS Services as our top priority. At public meetings and at Town and District Council level, we have condemned the STP Plan. If elected, we would both support our local Health Services, work to improve present provision and accessibility and oppose the STP Plan by organising Town, District and County Councils to reject it.

David Brenton

Annie Brenton