

1) Any candidate who supports the Wider Devon Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) is supporting its declared aim to slash £550 million from Devon’s healthcare budget by 2020/21.

Do you think this can be achieved without serious threat to the health, well-being and lives of your constituents? If you believe it can, can you provide an example from Britain or a comparable country where cuts amounting to nearly 10% of a local healthcare budget have been achieved without a serious deterioration in basic healthcare indicators?

If you believe such cuts will be a serious threat to the health, well-being and lives of your constituents and are prepared to oppose them, how will you do so? As a county councillor, what specific action would you be prepared to take to prevent such cuts?

2) North Devon District Hospital has been operating within budget or at a very modest deficit compared to much bigger deficits at other Devon hospitals.

Do you believe it is right that health services in North Devon should be sacrificed to fund deficits elsewhere?

As a county councillor, what would you do to support the retention of all services at North Devon District Hospital?

3) The process of making cuts is already well under way. The STP’s stated aim is to eliminate 400+ acute hospital beds and 190 community hospital beds across Devon. North Devon is now down to just 12 community hospital beds for a population of 170,000 and currently North Devon District Hospital’s bed-to-population ratio is only just above half the national average.

Do you believe this policy is acceptable? Does what you are seeing and hearing suggest that Devon’s hospitals are coping well with the large-scale reduction in beds?

4) Hospital beds are being eliminated in favour of the new model of “care closer to home”. Supposedly, too many people are in hospital who should not be there and patients are now being sent home quicker to receive continuing care in their own homes.

Do you believe that the Success Regime/STP/Clinical Commissioning Groups/Healthcare Trusts have demonstrated that “care closer to home” is actually working? If so, can you provide the documentary evidence?

Is it really feasible to cut £550 million from the healthcare budget and still provide the same quality of care? Does what you are seeing and hearing suggest to you that people are receiving an adequate quality of care in their own homes?

5) On 8 December, the full council unanimously passed a motion (“NHS Success Regime”) to halt the Wider Devon STP. Since then, the STP’s plans for major cuts in health service provision in Devon have continued to be implemented.

Do you think it is acceptable for the Success Regime/STP/Clinical Commissioning Groups/Healthcare Trusts to ignore the will of Devon County Council concerning the STP? What will you do to advocate for and enforce the unanimous vote?

6) In the debate that resulted in the above-mentioned unanimous vote, inherent conflicts of interest in the STP process and within the Success Regime generally were exposed and denounced.

In your view, what are those conflicts of interest? How should they be eliminated?

7) In the past seven months, the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee of Devon County Council has repeatedly failed to obtain basic important information and data from STP officials, even when those officials have publicly agreed to provide it. This is the information and data on which imminent decisions will be made on healthcare provision and access, including in relation to acute services at NDDH.

Do you believe that to date the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee has adequately fulfilled its scrutiny remit? How would you, as a county councillor, ensure that it does?

Do you believe the public can have any confidence in the STP process unless the statistics and studies, clinical evidence and outcomes, and measures and metrics used to justify major changes in healthcare provision are made available for all to examine?

If, as a councillor, you believe it is essential for you and your constituents to have access to the data on which crucial healthcare decisions will be made, what will you do to secure it? How will you do so?

8) SOHS believes that the provision of health and social care should be a key issue in the County Council elections and that all candidates should demonstrate that, if elected, they will positively and proactively represent their constituents in health matters.

Does your campaign literature align with the commitments that you have made in signing the pledge?

What do you think about the threat to our hospital services posed by the STP? Have you publicly rejected the STP as flawed? Have you stated how you will work to halt the STP?

Are you making the public aware of how, if elected, you will specifically work to safeguard our health provision and save our hospital services?