**Pencester Surgery**

**Patient Participation Group Meeting**

**Friday 25th June 2021**

Those present : Dr Ian McKenzie, Dr Carrick Richards, Julie Hooper, Michele Goodwin, Mike West, Geraldine Butchers, Georgette Rapley, George Higgins and Colin Bennett.

We met to discuss the ongoing plans to close our branch surgery Pencester Health. Dr McKenzie explained the current situation.

When the pandemic struck in March 2020 we found that the practice was already in a fairly strong position to meet the challenges that covid 19 presented us. We introduced telephone triage and telephone consulting a number of years ago and this has proved to be an invaluable tool in safely dealing with demand over the past year. Our receptionists were already trained and highly skilled care navigators to ensure that the maximum number of patients are dealt with on a daily basis and, more importantly, by the appropriate health care professional.

Prior to Brexit the GPs were issued with laptops to enable them to work from home if need be. This proved to be another invaluable asset during the pandemic. In addition, other key members of staff have now been supplied with laptops to ensure continuity of services should anyone not be able to be in the surgery. Most of our doctors now regularly work from home but we will always aim to have 2 GPs in the practice at any one time.

The introduction of remote working has enabled us to use the building in a different way. Pre pandemic we were struggling for clinical space and very much relied on the extra consulting rooms that Pencester Health gave us. We now find ourselves in a position where we can accommodate all of our staff on one site and hence we have had to make an important decision regarding Pencester Health.

Dover Health Centre is owned by NHS Property Services and when they took over ownership a few years ago they decided to change the terms and conditions for renting space in their buildings. This has meant that the service charges now bear no resemblance to reality. As a practice, we have been in dispute over these charges for a number of years and the ever increasing liability has now reached an unacceptable level. We currently have no lease agreement despite our best efforts to obtain one. The lease proposed by NHS Property Services is not acceptable and we have not reached an agreement.

Over a year ago we submitted our application to close Pencester Health to the CCG. All members of the PPG were informed at the time and our patient engagement exercise was completed. The CCG have prolonged this whole process and the application is still to be approved. The longer this process takes the greater the liability is going to build and this has now forced us to consider alternative ways to vacate the premises. We are considering giving notice to NHS Property Services with or without permission to do so from the CCG. If we were to do this we would be at risk of receiving a ‘breach of contract’ notice from the CCG. We are taking legal advice and are also being guided by Kent LMC. We will not take any action until we are sure of our position and the implications for the practice should we give notice to leave the Health Centre.

We will keep you fully informed if any action is taken.

**Next meeting Tuesday 14th September at 14.30pm.**