Date: 15th October 2024

Cllr Mark Hooper,

Portfolio Holder for Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

Thurrock Council, Civic Offices
New Road, Grays
RM17 6SL

**The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP**
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

Dear Secretary of State,

**Re: Health Care Provision in Thurrock**

I am Cllr Mark Hooper cabinet member for health social care and wellbeing at Thurrock Council.

I am writing to express my growing concern about the current state of health care provision in Thurrock, where key promises and initiatives appear to be stalling, and the quality of services is in decline. This situation is leaving many in our community underserved and increasingly worried about their access to essential care.

Thurrock was originally set to benefit from four new Integrated Medical and Wellbeing Centres (IMWC), which were critical to the planned closure of Orsett Hospital. However, only one centre has been delivered, and NHS England stopped the remaining three due to funding shortfalls in early 2024. This has placed considerable strain on local services. Moreover, the previous Secretary of State assured us that Orsett Hospital would not close, nor its services diminished, unless adequate alternatives were provided. Yet, the hospital has been allowed to deteriorate, with £10 to £12 million required for urgent repairs to keep it operational.

While it is encouraging that Thurrock is expected to open a new diagnostic centre by the summer of 2025, it is troubling to learn that about 50% of Orsett Hospital’s services will be transferred there. We were led to believe that the new diagnostic centre would supplement, not replace, existing services in the area. This raises concerns about Thurrock’s overall health care capacity and the future of Orsett Hospital.

Thurrock also faces a severe shortage of GPs. Recent data from the BBC highlights that Thurrock has the highest patient-to-GP ratio in the country, with 3,431 patients per GP, in stark contrast to areas like the Wirral and Stockport, where the ratio is around 1,850 patients per GP. This disparity places an enormous strain on our local GPs and severely impacts patients' ability to access timely care. I would urge you to support us in addressing this critical shortage.

Additionally, the nearest major hospital, Basildon Hospital, is struggling to meet national standards in several key areas, particularly in cancer care and children's outpatient services, where waiting times exceed 64 weeks. There are also worrying reports regarding early patient discharges and serious concerns about the safety of the hospital’s maternity services.

It is clear that the health care provision in Thurrock is falling short of expectations and needs. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these concerns in more detail and explore potential solutions to ensure that Thurrock’s residents receive the quality of health care they deserve.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,
Cllr Mark Hooper,



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