

BERA – E-NEWSLETTER 4th APRIL, 2017

At the AGM last week we had a talk by Dr Ronan Fenton. There were many questions left unanswered so we will start with what we believe is the up-to-date information regarding the A&E department at Southend Hospital.

1. The five options regarding the future of Southend, Broomfield and Basildon Hospitals have now been narrowed down to two, both of which propose having a specialist emergency centre based at Basildon Hospital. Southend and Broomfield could be downgraded to offer 24-hour walk in care but the most seriously ill patients will go to Basildon – prompting concerns over long journeys.

Is this what patients and their families want or need?

With our increasing older population, we have to ask serious questions. How quickly will patients get to Basildon Hospital by road in the event of a stroke or heart attack and importantly how quickly will the ambulances get back to Southend for any other emergencies. When relatives want to visit a family member in Basildon Hospital how will they get there and back if they don't have a car?

Southend has an airport and up to six million visitors every year. As I am sure many of you have noticed recently there are constant roadworks causing huge traffic jams, as well as the A127 often being gridlocked. How will Basildon Hospital cope with all these people let alone the rest of the area it will be covering?

Under the NHS overhaul Basildon Hospital will keep the Essex Cardiothoracic Centre and will have a specialist obstetric centre. Southend would remain a specialist cancer centre and offer elective surgery, while Broomfield will continue to have a plastic surgery and burns unit. The Mid and South Essex Success Regime insist that all hospitals will retain a 24-hour walk in A&E which will not just be for minor injuries, but are we in Southend going to end up with just an Accident unit without the Emergency?

Our local MP James Duddridge needs listen to his constituents and should be addressing all these concerns on our behalf.

2. At the BERA AGM we had a talk by Jeremy Martin from Southend Energy. One of the things he suggested was that everyone should compare energy companies each year to get the best deal. He also mentioned the only way to compare all energy companies was through Which, as they are not paid to recommend specific companies. We have been in touch with Which and found out that this service is free and can be accessed via www.which.co.uk/switch or by telephone on 0800 410 1149. Another interesting free service provided is care for the elderly accessed via www.which.co.uk/elderly-care.

3. Another speaker at the AGM was Adam Eckley who has been in the Fire Service for 32 years, the last 10 in Essex, and the last 3 as Acting Chief Fire Officer. The following is what he talked about, which was recorded in the minutes

Adam believes people underestimate the role of the Fire Service and are unaware how their service has changed.

Today there are 50 fire stations across the county, most of which were built in the 1950's and 60's and the service they were designed for is not necessarily the service we need today. During the 1980's they were responding to fires but nowadays they deal with more road traffic collisions than fires. Changes were made in the 1990's and they started educating people about how to prevent fires in the home, which has been very successful and there has been a 45% reduction in the number of cases they attend. Unfortunately, there has been an increase in the number of road traffic collisions but the number killed or badly hurt has remained steady. Presently there are 71 fire engines (although this will be reduced to 70) and despite having to respond to a greater range of incidents such as flooding (which they need boats for), collapsed buildings, animal rescues, terrorist attacks (need ballistic clothing) etc there is the problem of reduced funding. They currently have a £70m budget and 1,500 staff across the county.

The Fire Service also go into schools, speaking to 130,000 children each year to make them fire aware and fire safe and have also had success in talking to children on the verge of being excluded from school, and parents and children with dysfunctional relationships, to influence behaviour. They have also been into Chelmsford prison, speaking with young men about to be released, giving advice.

80% of the population have a working smoke alarm but they want every home in the county to have one. They obviously don't prevent fires but will bring a fire to your attention for you to deal with or evacuate the building. The Fire Service offer a smoke alarm fitting service for free and are keen to find out who is at risk, why they are at risk, and how they can be helped. 8 out of 10 who die in fires in the community are over the age of 60 so if you are aware of any neighbours or relatives without a smoke alarm please put them in touch with the Fire Service.

4. A BERA member has asked us to pass on to Lloyds Bank customers the fact that you are able to pay in cheques and cash to any Post Office. This is particularly useful since the closure of the Thorpe Bay branch.

5. Below is a message received from Transport for London regarding tube travel over Easter:

There will be no service on parts of the District, Circle and Hammersmith & City lines from Friday 14 until Monday 17 April. This is to allow us to test new signalling and continue Crossrail construction work at Whitechapel.

Circle Line

There will be no service between Hammersmith and Aldgate, via King's Cross St. Pancras. Please use Hammersmith & City or Metropolitan line services

District Line

Trains will not run between Aldgate East and West Ham.

Hammersmith & City line

There will be no service between Liverpool Street and Barking.

Rail replacement buses will operate every 10 minutes.

In addition, Whitechapel station will be closed all weekend and trains will not stop.

I am sorry for any disruption that these works may cause you.

[For full details, including other service changes during the Easter weekend, please visit tfl.gov.uk/easter-travel](http://tfl.gov.uk/easter-travel)

6. We are still looking for members who would be prepared to open their gardens to other BERA members on Saturday 17th June from 1.30-4.30pm. Please contact Freddie Dawkins on Freddie.dawkins1@gmail.com if you are interested.

7. Councillor Martin Terry is organising a meeting to discuss the ongoing saga of the Shoebury Common sea defences. The results of the test drilling of the foundations are now in. Therefore, we expect this meeting to come forward very quickly. We will keep you posted.

8. The problem of dog fouling was brought up at the AGM and a member has kindly forward the attached link which can be used to report any mess.

http://www.southend.gov.uk/info/200371/street_care_and_cleaning/725/dog_fouling