

Urgent Motion to Full Council 11.10.23

The pressure on general practice and primary care services is widely recognised and reported. This arises from a number of supply side and demand factors, some with roots going back many years. On the supply side, there is a national shortage of General Practitioners (GPs) as recruitment fails to keep pace with the numbers leaving the profession or reducing their workload in the interests of their own health and life-work balance. Inevitably, that shortfall is not evenly distributed, and some areas are more challenged to attract GPs either to existing vacancies or to establish new provision.

In England the ratio of GPs per 1000 patients is currently around 0.75 (0.58 FTE). In Kent and Medway, the ratio is 0.62 (0.49 FTE). In September 2022, the ratio in Swale was 0.53 (0.39 FTE). This figure has worsened since 2022 with more GP surgery's closing and existing GP's struggling to recruit. This figure is an average for Swale, but in some areas the ratio is as low as 0.14 per 1000 patients.

GPs have the central role, particularly in diagnosis and referral and the GP-patient ratio is a strong indicator of relative pressure on access to services. Without access to GP services, additional pressure is put on already stretched hospitals. Swale currently has the highest incidence of obesity in Kent and the numbers attending hospital with obesity related issues has grown in the past 5 years.

The population of Swale increased by 11.7% between 2011/2021 from 135,800 in 2011 to around 151,700 in 2021. This is a larger increase than both the national average (6.6%) and the South East Average (7.5%) and yet the number of GP's has fallen in this time.

House prices in Swale have risen by an average of 7.7% in the last twelve months with the average price paid for a property in Swale being in July 2023 being £334,000.

The cost of living in the South East and Swale in particular is one of the reasons given for GP's not locating to Kent.

The Council agrees that the Leader write to the Secretary of State for Health (**cc'ed to Swale MP's**) asking him to work with the council to provide innovative, funded solutions to encourage more GP's to locate in Swale. This could include financial assistance given to the council/GP to assist with housing for a fixed period.

Proposed by: Councillor Lloyd Bowen

Seconded by: Councillor Tim Gibson