

Councillor Stephen Cowan

Leader of the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
Hammersmith Town Hall, London W6 9JU



April 2019

Dear neighbour

Thank you. Because of you, the government has admitted defeat and scrapped its plan to demolish Charing Cross Hospital

On Tuesday 26 March the government finally gave up and scrapped its plan to demolish Charing Cross Hospital. While significant challenges for our local NHS remain, this is a huge victory.

Thank you to all the residents on the independent Save Our Hospitals campaign and to everyone who signed our petition and put your trust in us to fight to stop that dreadful plan.

As you know, this has been a long battle. In 2013 Jeremy Hunt MP, the Secretary of State for Health, signed off the ironically titled *Shaping a Healthier Future* (SaHF) plan, which detailed the closure of Charing Cross Hospital. It was the biggest hospitals closure programme in London's history. But SaHF was flawed from the beginning.

By November 2018, the government's climbdown had become inevitable:

- **In 2014**, the Council hired some of the best lawyers and health advisers in the country to work with us to challenge SaHF. We also asked Michael Mansfield QC to chair an independent public inquiry into SaHF.
- **In 2015**, the Mansfield Commission concluded SaHF was unsafe and provided the substantial body of evidence into its failings which, at that time, formed the basis of any potential legal action by the Council and others should government health authorities attempt to implement their plan and demolish our hospital.
- **By 2016**, local health chiefs admitted SaHF had failed to hit critical deadlines for its implementation. They delayed their plan for Charing Cross until 2021. They also sought to re-launch SaHF with what they called a Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP). Hammersmith & Fulham, and our partners in Ealing, were the first councils in the country to refuse to sign an STP.
- **In 2017**, the government's health authorities wrote to me threatening action against me and our campaign - bizarrely claiming their proposal to demolish our hospital and replace it with a small clinic just 13% its size was a "transformation" not a hospital closure.
- **By November 2018**, the health authorities admitted SaHF had been put on hold. They announced that it could not be safely implemented until late into the next decade. At that point it was a matter of time before the government capitulated and finally agreed to scrap SaHF.

Going by the huge numbers of congratulations people have sent, it's clear this win has given hope to others around the country who are trying to save their hospitals and NHS services.

But challenges remain for our local NHS

This year, cuts of approximately £30million will include proposals to reduce urgent care centre and local GP hours along with cuts to NHS services such as hydrotherapy and palliative care.

Meanwhile, we are challenging a flaw in the government's funding system which has given a private company called Babylon GP at Hand at least £10million of Hammersmith & Fulham's local NHS budget to provide digital NHS health services for people all over the country. This has pushed our local health budget into deficit.

But for now, this is a major victory for the residents of Hammersmith & Fulham. It proves once again that when people work together with persistence and determination, they can take on the powerful and achieve great things.

Thank you for making this victory happen.

With warm regards



Cllr Stephen Cowan

Leader of the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

P.S. Please put the attached poster in your window to celebrate all who work at Charing Cross and let people know we will always defend our hospitals and NHS.