

Speech to Council on the Future of Our NHS

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to address this council on an issue that affects every single one of us at some point in our lives: the future of our NHS.

We have a unique opportunity to shape the direction of our health service through the current consultation on the NHS. This consultation is open now but closes imminently on **December 2nd**. Time is short, and action is urgent.

The NHS is one of our nation's greatest achievements, embodying the principles of compassion, equity, and care for all. However, it faces significant challenges, many of which stem from austerity measures over the last 14 years. If we are to preserve and enhance this cherished institution, we must tackle these issues head-on.

In my brief time, I will focus on four key areas: **Primary Care, Community Services, Social Care, and Privatisation.**

Primary Care

Primary care is the foundation of the NHS. It is where most people first seek help when they are unwell. It is where trusted relationships with GPs are formed and where early interventions can prevent more serious health problems. Yet today, our primary care system is overstretched and under-resourced.

We urgently need investment to increase the number of GPs. Shockingly, there are qualified GPs currently unemployed—by deliberate design. We must address this waste of resource. We need to expand multidisciplinary teams and ensure practices have the tools and technology to deliver accessible, high-quality care.

As someone whose first qualification was in General Practice, I know what effective primary care looks like. I also know how vital it is to protect it. Diversions like NHS 111 and Pharmacy First, while potentially helpful, would be far more effective—and cost-efficient—if integrated into General Practice. This requires investment and commitment, not temporary fixes or fragmented solutions.

Community Services

Community services are another critical pillar of our NHS. From district nurses to mental health teams, these services provide localized, personalized care that keeps people healthy and out of hospital.

Strengthening community care allows us to deliver the right care, in the right place, at the right time. Decades ago, during my time in South Wales, it was clear that patients thrived when managed locally by professionals who understood their needs and circumstances.

Over the years, however, community services have become fragmented and, in many cases, privatised. This has undermined the continuity of care that patients value—especially those with chronic conditions or complex needs. Fragmentation leads to duplication, delays, frustration, and poorer outcomes. We must reintegrate and strengthen these services to deliver seamless, effective care.

Social Care

Social care is often treated as an afterthought, but it is fundamental to the health and well-being of our communities—particularly as our population ages. Bath and North East Somerset have a higher-than-average proportion of older residents, many of whom live with long-term conditions and rely on social care to maintain their independence and dignity.

Yet our social care system is underfunded, understaffed, and struggling to meet demand. Reforming social care isn't just about increasing funding; it's about recognizing its critical role in preventing hospital admissions, enabling timely discharges, and improving overall quality of life.

Privatisation

Finally, I must address privatisation. While I am not opposed to enterprise in general, when it comes to healthcare, the motives of for-profit enterprises often conflict with the principles of the NHS. Private companies tend to focus on the most profitable services, leaving the NHS to shoulder the burden of less profitable but equally essential care. This erodes the NHS's ability to provide equitable, comprehensive services and undermines the principle of cross-subsidization that makes the system work.

Conclusion

By prioritizing investment in primary care, community services, and social care—and by resisting further privatisation—we can create a resilient, cost-effective NHS that delivers world-class care for all.

As I conclude, I urge our council to engage, please make a formal submission to the NHS consultation. I also encourage my fellow councillors to make personal submissions and to remind our constituents of the importance of their voices in this process and I urge them to also make their submissions, it is our opportunity. .

The NHS is one of the best healthcare systems in the world. Together, let us ensure it remains a beacon of compassion, equity, and efficiency—not just for today but for generations to come.

Thank you.