Appendix 4

WALTON MEDICAL CENTRE

DR. NIGEL ROPER
DR. JOANNE THOMPSON
DR. ERIC LEMKE
DR CARLOS KNORR

June 2014

Dear householder and patient,

You will no doubt be aware that for some time now the practice has not been able to attract new doctors to join the partnership. It remains one of several practices in Tendring and North East Essex who are struggling to maintain primary care services for the community with an ever decreasing workforce. For some months the partners have supplemented the shortfall of doctors by employing locum GPs but this is financially unsustainable in the long term. Our negotiations with NHS England, the body responsible for commissioning primary care services, have failed to produce any solution to this problem and it is becoming increasingly clear that the NHS as whole is not in a position to increase the number of new doctors entering the service to fill current vacancies.

You may also know that from September 2013 through to April 2014 we were forced to close our branch surgery at Kirby Cross due to a lack of doctors available to run surgeries from there. We were very mindful of the huge inconvenience this caused our patients who relied on the surgery for their healthcare needs. We were able to re-open the site earlier this spring but this too is not sustainable as we move into the summer months.

The likelihood that the practice will be able to permanently fill our GP vacancies remains doubtful for the foreseeable future and so it will be necessary to look at alternative ways of maintaining GP services for the local population. With this in mind the partners have approached NHS England with a proposal they believe will do this and allow the Kirby surgery to remain open and accessible to the local community. The partners have been in discussion with the GPs in Thorpe le Soken who are interested in purchasing the surgery at 88 Frinton Road, Kirby Cross. Their practice area already extends into the villages of Kirby Cross, Kirby le Soken and Great Holland and they are seeking a branch surgery outlet closer in these localities from which they can provide more localised services. At the same time the Walton practice will withdraw its practice area eastwards to a new boundary line running along Elm Tree Avenue to the level crossing at Frinton. Walton patients living west of this line will not be de-registered from our practice list but no new patients will be accepted onto our list from the areas affected. Patients currently living in Kirby Cross, Kirby Le Soken and Great Holland will have the option of either remaining with the Walton practice accessing services from the Vicarage Lane site or registering with the Thorpe practice where services will be available from both 88 Frinton Road and the main surgery in the High Street, Thorpe.

NHS England however are insisting that other practices in the area are given a similar opportunity to offer services from the site at 88 Frinton Road or within the immediate vicinity and so will be contacting all neighbouring practices to seek expressions of interest. They also require that the
Walton practice conducts a consultation exercise to allow patients the opportunity to comment on the proposals. With this in mind the partners wish to give you the opportunity to write to Martin Durrant, the Practice Manager at the surgery indicating whether you are in sup-port of or against this proposal. Please send your comments to the practice by 30th June 2014. The aim is to conclude the necessary negotiations for the transfer of ownership of the Kirby Surgery by September 2014.

The partners very much regret having to take this step but feel that this is the only way it can safeguard the continuing provision of a surgery in Kirby Cross run by doctors who live in and have a commitment to patients in the community. We are therefore asking for your support for this proposal.
Yours sincerely,

The Partners and staff at Walton Medical Centre