

RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL

QUESTION PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 10

COUNCIL – 20 SEPTEMBER 2023

QUESTION D

Councillor Edwards to ask the Leader of the Council, Councillor Poole:

“Community pharmacies in Rugby play a vital part in our local health economy. Community pharmacies can improve people’s health and reduce pressure on NHS hospitals and GPs. With many local residents finding it more difficult to get face to face GP appointments, and other health services stretched beyond breaking point, it is more important than ever that we support community pharmacies to ensure medicines, clinical services and medical advice can be accessed locally.

Would the Leader agree to write a joint letter from all political groups to the Secretary of State and the MP for Rugby and Bulkington outlining our concerns and

1. request urgent emergency funding to keep pharmacies in Rugby open, and reverse closures where they are needed;
2. empower local fully qualified pharmacists with greater prescribing rights and public health advisory responsibilities, to prevent costly and avoidable hospital admissions and free up GP time to focus on more urgent requests; and
3. develop a long-term plan for pharmacy services to put them on a sustainable financial footing.

Councillor Poole, Leader of the Council, to reply as follows:

“We recognise the important role of pharmacies throughout our communities in Rugby and I share the concerns of residents that although the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment in October 2022 found sufficient numbers of pharmacies, subsequently there have been closures of some national pharmacy chains. This has resulted in additional pressure on many of our community pharmacies.

I would be more than happy to write, alongside other political groups, to those who are able to take the steps to keep pharmacies in Rugby open. However, this responsibility lies not with politicians as the question suggests, but with the NHS commissioning services and the Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Service who make decisions about the need for, and resourcing of, pharmacies in our community.

In addition, the “Delivery plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care,” published in May 2023 by NHS England, contained proposals for Pharmacy First which will enable pharmacies to prescribe to patients. Pharmacy First will launch before the end of 2023, learning from areas that have implemented similar models, subject to a DHSC-led consultation with the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee. This service will enable pharmacists to supply prescription-only medicines, including antibiotics and antivirals where clinically appropriate, to treat seven common health conditions (sinusitis, sore throat, earache, infected insect bite, impetigo, shingles, and uncomplicated urinary

tract infections in women) without the need to visit a GP. NHS England will also support research to ensure a consistent approach to antibiotic and antiviral use between general practice and community pharmacy. Further information about the Delivery Plan and Pharmacy First can be found at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/delivery-plan-for-recovering-access-to-primary-care-2/>

I will, therefore, write a letter to the Chair of the NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care System to express the concerns of this Council regarding access to pharmacy services within our community, and urging them to take steps to ensure that our residents have access to this service. I am happy to co-sign this letter with all Group Leaders, to convey the united strength of feeling that exists on this vital matter.

I will also ensure that a copy of this letter is provided to Mark Pawsey MP, and to the Minister for Primary Care and Public Health, to further support the work our MP has done and continues to do on providing additional health services in Rugby.”