



**HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE –
WEDNESDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2025**

**QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER STANDING ORDER 7(3) and
(5)**

The following questions are to be put to the Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1. Question from Mr. A. Innes CC:

As has been widely publicised, the services at St Mary's Birth Centre have been suspended for an indeterminate period of time due to staff shortages. The community in Melton and the surrounding areas are rightly concerned that this closure may become permanent. There has been local representations made by residents, councillors and the MO for Melton and Syston.

I would like to know what are the current plans for the birthing centre, and how do the ICB intend to fulfil their statutory responsibility to provide adequate health services for the communities they serve?

Reply by the Chairman:

I have asked University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust (UHL) for an answer to your question and I have received the following response:

“Pausing births and inpatient care at the Centre from 7 July was a difficult but necessary step. We did this to ensure the safety of mums and babies - nothing is more important. We are currently working with colleagues at the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Integrated Care Board to determine next steps for St Mary's Birth Centre. This includes discussion of the safety risks and mitigation. We anticipate an update from the ICB and UHL will happen before January 2026.”

As soon as UHL and the ICB are ready to provide any further detail about their plans I intend to request that they attend a meeting of the Leicestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to present a report, not just on St Mary's Birth Centre, but on the plans for maternity services in the whole of Leicestershire. Officers will ensure that you are made aware of when this meeting will take place and provide you with a copy of the report.

2. Question from Mr. A. Innes CC:

Melton Mowbray is serviced by a single GP practice, Latham House, and following a recent report that the project to site a second GP practice in the town has been suspended there is further upset in the community following this decision. The Melton community cannot continue to have a situation where appointments are pushed out to 6 weeks and even for simple tests, we have to wait weeks to have these done.

I would like to ask does the Chair of the Committee share my concerns and how is the ICB planning to meet their statutory requirement to ensure that there is adequate healthcare provision for the communities in their designated areas, and more specifically for Melton Mowbray?

Reply by the Chairman:

I share the concerns of residents and local members from Melton over this issue. Therefore, we will be examining this matter in more detail at a future meeting of the Leicestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. I am aware of concerns elsewhere in the County over GP practices, so any report we have will cover not just Melton, but other areas as well. In addition, the issue of access to GP practices is going to be examined by the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Joint Health Scrutiny Committee in the new year.

In the meantime, I have obtained the following statement from the Integrated Care Board:

“We are working closely with GP practices across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR), including in Melton, to ensure any available, additional funding and recruitment opportunities are taken up and used to meet the health needs of our diverse communities, equitably. Practices are supported to implement new ways of working to improve access and care, including introducing new technology, integrating a wider range of health professionals, innovating how care is provided and improving premises.

We are working with Latham House specifically to increase the ways the practice can support local residents, including a new digital suite at the main site, an approved redevelopment of a property owned by the practice on Sherrard Street to extend clinical services and increasing recruitment including five GPs. We are committed to continuing to work with Melton Borough Council on the health services provided for residents and our Chief Executive and Chief Strategy Officer are due to meet over the coming weeks with the council leaders.

To ensure we use limited resources in the best way to meet the needs of all patients, we are also coordinating partners across the health and care system by matching them to the right level of care for their medical condition, with the right health professional, in the right part of the NHS, first time, and improving access to same-day care. We are currently engaging with local communities to raise awareness of a two-step process to help them get the right care.

Supporting information:

- The healthcare provided by GP practices is funded according to the national GP contract and the integrated care board receives limited other funding streams with which to increase investment in general practice.
- Recent examples include additional investment to ensure local practices receive equitable funding to provide core services and encouraging primary care networks (groups of practices) to recruit additional staff from a wide range of roles under the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) - 30 additional newly qualified GPs have been employed in practices in LLR under this scheme.
- ICBs do not routinely receive capital funding to develop new practices themselves. Any new premises therefore need to be funded by local authority S106 contributions, private/public investment and GP practice investment.
- This helps balance the needs of all patients across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland using limited NHS resources.
- Over recent years, GP practices have been working hard to evolve how they provide care to improve access and improve patients' health.
 - o GP practices have a wider mix of specialist health professional who work together to care for patients. GPs look after the most seriously unwell patients and those with the most complex needs and people with less serious health conditions are supported by the wider practice team, appropriate for the condition.
 - o GP practices also work more closely with community pharmacies. Now conditions that used to be seen in general practice are looked after in a pharmacy, for example under the Pharmacy First scheme.
 - o Practices are using new technologies which are often more convenient for many people. Digital options won't be suitable for everyone, but they free up traditional methods for those who can't use online options.

- o Cloud based telephone systems, with a call-back function, and online forms for making requests.
- Through GP practices and NHS 111, same-day appointments can be arranged if a patient's condition means that they need to be seen quickly. This could be at their own practice, at a local pharmacy under the Pharmacy First scheme, at an urgent treatment centre or another GP practice or health centre (during evenings, weekends and bank holidays). Melton Urgent Care Centre provides these latter appointments. Melton also has a Minor Injury Unit.
- The ICB regularly seeks the views of local people about the services they experience, in order to make improvements. The ICB carried out an LLR-wide GP practice experience survey in 2024. Local residents currently have the opportunity to share their views of same-day appointments, such as general practice and pharmacy appointments, and a new two-step approach to getting care quickly. The questionnaire closes on 7 December 2025:
<https://leicesterleicestershireandrutland.icb.nhs.uk/be-involved/need-help-fast-engagement/>"

3. Question from Mr. J. T. Orson CC

Melton residents were dismayed to learn that the ICB has deferred funding for a second GP practice until February 2027. This decision has understandably intensified concern about the adequacy of current provision.

Would you agree that the time is right for constructive scrutiny—particularly in relation to Latham House Medical Practice? Persistent concerns around staffing levels, patient engagement, waiting times, and care protocols suggest that Health Scrutiny might now play a vital role in clarifying both current practice and future need. A formal review could offer reassurance, transparency, and a pathway forward.

I also believe all four Melton LCC Members and MBC would welcome the opportunity to contribute a solutions-focused perspective. There are areas where modest adjustments could yield meaningful improvements, and I'm confident both Councils stand ready to support any ongoing efforts.

I hope this letter strikes the right balance between challenge and collaboration. Please let me know if further discussion or additional detail would be helpful.

Warm regards,
 Joe Orson
 Melton Wolds Division

Reply by the Chairman:

I agree that the time is right for constructive scrutiny of the issues relating to Latham House Medical Practice. Officers that support the Leicestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been liaising with the Integrated Care Board regarding which would be a suitable Committee meeting for representatives of the ICB to come and present a detailed report on access to GP Practices, not just in the Melton area but in the whole County of Leicestershire. It is hoped that the report would address many of the issues you raise such as staffing levels and waiting times. The members that represent divisions in the Melton area will be invited to the Committee meeting at which this issue is considered. However, the limitations in terms of the powers and time constraints of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee must be recognised. Whilst the Committee can request reports and ask questions at public meetings, a more in-depth formal review would have to be carried out by the ICB themselves. Please see the interim response from the ICB set out in the answer to the question from Mr. Innes CC above. Please be assured that the Committee will continue to scrutinise the ICB on this topic and will invite you to any Committee meeting relating to health issues in the Melton area.

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