Local Government and Communities Committee

Planning (Scotland) Bill

Submission from Dr Richard Humble

I would like to make comment on the above bill and the need to take into account of the impact on local surgeries and community health services when making planning decisions.

In Blairgowrie, which already had a high elderly population and high number of care homes and sheltered housing complexes when I arrived in 2003, we have already had 2 new care homes and 2 further housing complexes for elderly people built in recent years without any consultation with the local practices or community staff as to whether we could cope, along with a few hundred new houses.

We now have a plan for another several hundred houses and 'supported living' plus possibly another care home (despite one being empty and mothballed already in the vicinity!) going through planning with no formal consultation with local healthcare services as to whether this is manageable. The GP workforce is currently at capacity and new partners and even locums are difficult to find and the community and social care staff struggle to cope with the existing numbers, even before extra responsibility/shift of workload from GPs to community staff planned under the new GP contract which is designed to help alleviate unsustainable GP workload and improve recruitment. Our premises are at capacity already and the neighbouring practice doesn't have much extra space either and premises changes will be the Health Board responsibility from April 2018, but these things take a long time to happen with limited funding and often aren't planned until after the developments have started.

Serious consideration should be given to enshrine in law the need to ensure healthcare services locally can cope with any developments at the planning stage and if approved ensure that this provision is put in place at the same time as the development happens (or before)

Thank you

Dr Richard Humble