

If your Council is just rubber stamping STPs through the Health and Wellbeing Board, without even knowing what's in them most of the time, please email your ward Councillors and ask them to Stop the STPs. You can find your ward Councillors email addresses on your local Council website or through this website <https://www.writetothem.com/>. Here's a template email you can use. STARTS

Dear Councillor [insert your ward councillors' names here]

I am writing to ask you to stop the Council from rubber stamping both the locality and the "Footprint" Sustainability and Transformation Plans. These are being drawn up in conditions of secrecy imposed by the government's quango, NHS England, and will accelerate NHS cuts and privatisation.

The Sustainability and Transformation Plans are due to be submitted to NHS England on 21st October and contracts for NHS services to be delivered through the STPs in the next two financial years have to be signed on 23rd December.

Julia Simon, who recently quit as head of NHS England's commissioning policy unit and programme director for co-commissioning of primary care, has warned that forcing health and care organisations to come together so quickly to draw up these complex plans is likely to backfire. She said that, up against tight deadlines, organisations were likely to make unrealistic financial forecasts and claims about benefits to patient care, "and then you have a lot of lies in the system about the financial position, benefits that will be delivered."

At the very least, these plans should be subject to proper scrutiny in Council and Joint Health Scrutiny Committees.

But by allowing these Plans to be developed without public or councillor scrutiny, and simply rubber stamping them in the Health and Wellbeing Board without proper knowledge or understanding of what they contain, I fear the Council has failed to carry out due diligence in protecting the NHS on behalf of the public.

Years of NHS underfunding mean hospitals, GPs and community health services are struggling to provide safe and effective services; chronic government under-investment in training has resulted in staff shortages that provide a major threat to the future of a publicly-funded NHS.

With the imposition of Sustainability and Transformation Plans, NHS Improvement - the NHS regulator - has instructed NHS organisations to list services which could be axed or centralised, making "rapid progress" during the current financial year.

Statements from NHS England and the NHS Confederation - the organisation that represents the interests of private health companies working in the NHS - show how STPs are the vehicle for finishing off the privatisation of the NHS.

The secrecy shrouding the STPs is an abuse of our democratic rights. It is being met with protests at Health & Wellbeing Board meetings, Clinical Commissioning Group meetings and the offices of NHS England - all with a role in developing the Sustainability and Transformation Plans.

I hope you will support these entirely justified protests in order to protect our NHS.

Kind regards