**Kiss of Death for Old Trafford A&E?**

**By Leon Horton**

Services at Trafford General Hospital, the birthplace of the NHS, could soon go under the knife. A recently leaked report calling for the closure of the A&E department - along with the Intensive Care Unit and children’s services - has been reviewed, without public consultation, by local politicians.

The report, obtained by the Save Trafford General Campaign, outlines several proposals that would see the facility either transformed into a minor illness and injury unit or downgraded to an urgent care centre; whilst emergency patients would be taken to Whythenshawe Hospital or the Manchester Royal Infirmary.

Despite health campaigner’s fears, NHS Trafford insist the changes - called ‘A New Health Deal for Trafford’ - are necessary if the hospital is to remain sustainable in the future. They are currently looking at four options, all but one of which would mean the removal of the A&E unit. Mike Barker from NHS Trafford said: ‘We have to make changes if we want the hospital to survive. It cannot carry on as it is now.’

The proposed changes, coming after the health trust was taken over by Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust in April, are a direct response to a £19 million deficit in Trafford General’s budget. But campaigners against the plans are having none of it. Joanne Harding, local councillor and co-ordinator for the Save Trafford General Campaign, says: ‘We are demanding that option one - no change - is put to the people of Trafford in any public consultation... We want to send a very clear message to the Central Manchester Trust: save Trafford A&E.’

And now campaigners are upping the ante. Not only are they planning a protest rally, but Chairperson Matthew Finnegan has contacted group leaders from the three main political parties asking them to oppose the ‘New Deal’. Councillor David Acton, Labour, responded: ‘The Labour Group is fully behind the campaign to save Trafford General - to ensure there is no downgrading of the A&E service. I am deeply disturbed about what I’m hearing from the Trust. The hospital does not belong to the Trust, it belongs to the public.’ Matt Colledge, Conservative, was a little less forthright: ‘Trafford Conservatives are opposed to the loss of A&E. However, we recognise that change is required... that there are positive proposals within the new arrangements and we welcome these.’ The Liberal Democrats have yet to reply.

The protest rally is planned for July 7th, starting at Golden Hill Park in Urmston. For more information on this and the campaign visit the website at www.savetraffordgeneral.com