

Dilke closure concern is sparked by review

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CINDERFORD'S historic Dilke Memorial Hospital could face closure under a major shake-up of health services in the area.

But health chiefs have been warned they would have "a fight on your hands" if they tried to close it.

West Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust is undertaking a review of services in the Forest of Dean and have outlined three options for the future of health care in the Forest.

One would involve closing the Dilke and relocating to a purpose-built site closer to Cinderford town centre although the Trust was keen to stress that closure was not already a foregone conclusion, merely an option being looked at.

The other two options on the table are investing massive amounts of cash into the Dilke and up-grading services on the current site or keeping the services as they are.

But trust bosses say it will take around £1.2 million just to maintain the Dilke as it is because of its poor condition.

And the cash to do this would have to come from a third party investment because government funds no longer stretch to major capital projects.

Speaking at a meeting of Cinderford Town Council this week, Liam Williams, the trust's primary care development and locality commissioning manager for the North Forest said no decisions had been made.

He said: "There is no hidden agenda here.

"We have no plans to close the Dilke at the moment, we are simply at the starting point of the review of services in the Forest.

"The three options are being looked at and a report will be compiled outlining the best option.

"We are very much aware of the strong feeling and the heritage of the Dilke and we do not want to do anything that would jeopardise that."



HOSPITAL: The Dilke Memorial Hospital at Cinderford, named after a former MP for the district.

But town councillors were not convinced that they were being told the real story

Councillor Frank Beard said: "For about 20 or 30 years I have heard rumours that the Dilke is closing but long term I would like to know if it is your intention to close the Dilke."

And fellow councillor David Giddy said he was concerned about the future of the Dilke.

He said: "People around here

have very strong feelings about the Dilke and you would have a fight on your hands if you tried to close it down."

The review currently being undertaken by West Gloucestershire PCT should take around six months to complete.

The findings will then be made public with the preferred option being revealed by March next year.

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