

**Director of Public Health**  
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Mr Shaun O'Reilly  
Committee Member  
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**Date** October 9<sup>th</sup> 2019

Dear Mr O'Reilly

### **Birchall**

I'm writing to acknowledge receipt of your letter to Mr Haigh, of Welwyn Hatfield Council, of 4<sup>th</sup> October, copied to me.

I will consider your letter with my colleagues and respond further in due course on the other points if needed but at this stage it appears to me to be largely a matter for Welwyn Hatfield Council.

In terms of a suggested cancer cluster you raise in your letter. I would make the following initial points:

1. Cancer is unfortunately very common and is responsible for around 250 deaths across Welwyn Hatfield every year.
  - a. This number is in line with the national rate of cancer deaths.
  - b. Our regular reviews of cancer monitoring give no cause to suggest any cluster of cancer exists.
2. Cancer Cluster investigations follow a national protocol whereby the Director of Public Health for the area, after a local review of data and evidence, and where there are clear signals from existing trends and rates that there is an issue to be investigated, requests an investigation to be undertaken by national teams with specific expertise in cancer cluster investigation. That request can only come from the Director of Public Health.
3. At present I do not consider that I have any basis on which to make such a request because:

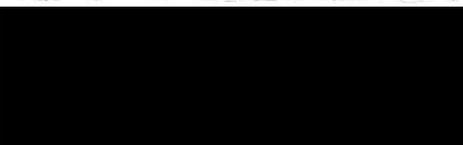
- a. The information I have from you doesn't yet provide me with enough information to undertake any review on whether there is or is not a possible cancer cluster present and gives no evidence to suggest a cluster exists.
  - b. Our regular monitoring of the cancer data for the area raises no suspicions as things currently stand to warrant a cluster investigation.
  - c. The cancer registry has raised no issue with me which would lead me to suggest rates may be out of the ordinary and require further detailed investigation.
4. I would need much more information before I could make a judgement on whether this warranted requesting a more detailed local review and/or call in national cancer cluster investigation services, including as much detail as possible regarding :
- a. the specific geographical area you believe to be concerned,
  - b. the number of cancer cases/deaths you believe have been identified in that area,
  - c. the time period over which these cases have occurred and
  - d. the specific types of cancer involved.

Your letter suggests you may have these. If you could provide these preferably by email, that would be helpful in enabling me to review your evidence, double check the rates and decide what, if any, further action is needed from a cancer cluster investigation viewpoint..

5. But for all the reasons given above I would not at this stage be making a recommendation for a cancer cluster investigation.

Since, if a cancer cluster investigation were deemed to be appropriate, it could be done by national experts, I would not feel Welwyn Hatfield Council or the County Council need commission any independent study on this matter outside the national protocol.

Yours sincerely



**Professor Jim McManus**  
**Director of Public Health**