

Watlington Medical Centre PPG Committee Press Release October 2025

The latest PPG Committee meeting was held on Tuesday 30th September at the Medical Centre. With Margaret in the Chair, the meeting focused on introduction of the government mandated on-line appointment booking system, the impact of medical staff shortages, the plans for the Committee's fund raising and the date for the AGM.

Introduction of the on-line appointment booking service. – With the government mandating the use of an on-line appointment booking system by 1st October 2025, the Watlington surgery opted for a soft introduction slightly earlier to enable teething problems to be identified and overcome. This was supported by the PPG Committee staffing an agreed survey of patients on the morning of the 4th August. The survey identified that the elderly and those with limited IT skills or access were most opposed to the new system. This will be mitigated by the continuation of the phone line booking system. However, when taking phone bookings, the reception staff will complete the on-line system on behalf of the patient and submit them alongside individually submitted on-line requests. The other main issue identified was the misalignment of timings between the on-line system, reception opening times for phone bookings and the commencement of appointment triage. This was overcome by the change to timings in that the on-line system and reception phone lines will be open from 08.00 with appointment triage commencing at 08.30. The government has mandated that patients should be able to request appointments throughout the normal surgery working day. More experience of the submission of these requests is required to enable a workable plan to be put into practice.

Medical staff shortages. – The surgery is operating on reduced capacity due to the departure of a GP and Nurse Practitioner. Currently the national statistics for the impact of understaffing on Medical surgeries is a 17% increase in patient responsibility (1938 to 2295 patients per GP). Despite all the positives offered by the Watlington surgery; Good air-conditioned building, excellent team and working environment, pharmacy on site and competitive wages, the recruitment drive is not generating the hoped for applicants, including one potential recently withdrawing from selection due to travel distances. That said they are interviewing soon and expect recruitment to ease some of the anticipated issues with the new appointment booking system.

Fund Raising – The PPG Committee fund is in a healthy position. The has been aided by the decision by HSBC to waiver the £8 a month bank charges against the account which were due to be levied this year. The Financial team lead by Sue are in the process of submitting funding bids to the Norfolk Community Fund and Borough Council to support in-house fund raising and an extension to the Health Walks and other patient support initiatives throughout the Watlington Surgery footprint.

AGM and Committee Meeting – The Watlington Surgery has a very large footprint and the PPG Committee are concerned that the membership is very Watlington village centric. To ensure your views, concerns and suggestions are represented it is essential that the committee is populated by patients from all areas. The Committee commitment is to a meeting at the surgery once every three months for two hours and the AGM. If you would like to join the committee or attend the AGM, please contact the Secretary (robarratt@live.co.uk or 07736429425) Also, if you cannot attend but have a question or suggestion that you would like to raise, please use either the email the Secretary or use the drop box by the surgery reception.

Dates for your diary –

AGM - Watlington Surgery 14.00 – 15.00, 18th November 2025

Committee Meeting - Watlington Surgery 14.00 – 15.00, 20th January 2026

Quiz Night - Watlington Village Hall 22nd March 2026

Margaret, Robert and Sue