

# Steep drop in delayed discharges welcomed

A FALL in the number of people stuck in Fife hospitals in the past month has been welcomed as health and social care partners insisted lessons will be learned from the recent bed blocking crisis.

Members of Fife's health and social care partnership yesterday heard the number of delayed discharges likely to be reported to ISD Scotland for February should stand at 117, with just seven said to be waiting more than the national standard of six weeks.

**"Getting the number down to seven is a fantastic improvement, but that is still seven too many, and going from 156 to 117 is a fantastic improvement, but that is still too many."**

The news comes after January figures showed Fife had the highest number of delayed discharge patients in Scotland, when 156 delayed discharges were recorded and 61 waiting more than six weeks.

The improvement has

been hailed, but council leader Peter Grant warned the recent situation could be repeated unless difficult decisions are taken on how care is provided in Fife.

Since the January figure, joint council-NHS Fife funding of £500,000 has cut numbers and moved more people to a more appropriate care setting. But it was widely accepted that radical changes in joint approach are needed to ensure future challenges, such as an increasingly elderly population, can be met.

"Getting the number down to seven is a fantastic improvement, but that is still seven too many, and going from 156 to 117 is a fantastic improvement, but that is still too many," Mr Grant admitted.

"I don't know if it's being realistic to go a full year without anyone being in delayed discharge but we should try to get as close to that as we possibly can.

"I would say the improvement we've seen has been better than I expected but it does show that we've got to be prepared to take decisions on how we



Mr Brett.

provide quality care within the resources we have.

"What we did over the winter has put us in a semi-stable position to give us a bit of breathing space but if we don't take the difficult decisions I'm talking about, I guarantee this winter will be at least as bad, if not worse, and it will be the same the winter after that.

"We're trying to make an unsustainable system work for even more people."

The improvement follows a tremendously tricky period for NHS Fife and the

council with spiralling numbers of delayed discharges and immense pressure put on the system.

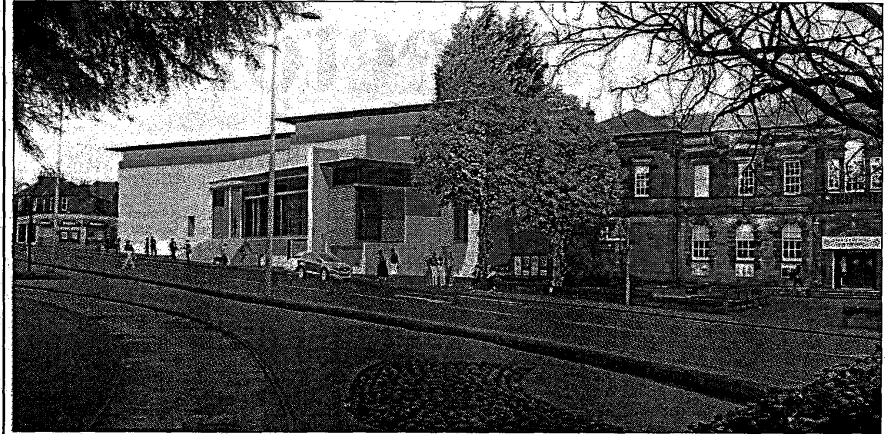
Indeed, yesterday's partnership meeting touched on the effect "boarding" moving patients from ward to ward—and patients, as many patients found themselves in an inappropriate ward for their condition.

Councillor Tim Brett, social work and health committee chairman, said the recent crisis simply highlighted the need for better ways of working to be looked at across the board.

"We tend to concentrate on people who are stuck but we need to look at the other side, does everyone need to go into hospital, are there other ways to get a diagnosis without them having to go in?"

He said Fife's share of the £70 million Change Fund should help Fife look at ways to avoid hospital admissions, such as rehabilitation and telecare technology which can help people live more independently in their own homes.

● See comment, Page 14.



A computer-generated image of the proposed multiplex cinema in Kirkcaldy.

# New cinema plan for Kirkcaldy

by Charlene Wilson

KIRKCALDY COULD soon see the return of the silver screen for the first time in 10 years if plans for a town centre cinema are given the go-ahead.

Robert Kilgour, who owns the former Station Hotel next to the Adam Smith Theatre, has unveiled plans to transform the historic building into a dedicated picture house.

It is estimated the venture could create up to 30 full and part-time jobs, as well as employment opportunities during the construction stage.

But the idea has to win approval from Fife planners, a task Mr Kilgour considers no mean feat, after previous proposals were rejected—including a housing development, flats and turning the building into a student venue.

The council planning department have in the past said demolition was

not a favourable option because, although Historic Scotland feels the building does not merit being listed, it has been part of Kirkcaldy's built heritage for more than a century.

In September 2010, planning officer Stuart Wilson said, "The structural information submitted does not justify demolition of the building on safety grounds and currently the building appears in a safe structural condition and is standing of its own accord."

Mr Kilgour said he feels he is in a "catch 22 situation" at present.

"On the one hand the council won't let me demolish until I can confirm interest from an operator, on the other cinema operators won't commit until I have demolition permission.

"As a result I have spent a lot of time, effort and money on this and have enlisted the help of architects Davidson Design, who have drawn up detailed plans about how the

proposed development would look in the hope it will help convince planning officers that this development would be good for the local community and indeed the town as a whole.

"I do have several cinema operators who may be interested in this once demolition permission is granted but am not at liberty to say who at this stage.

"My hands are tied, I don't know what the outcome will be, but I've enough faith in this venture to know it can be a success and hopefully I will have a chance to prove that and I am quietly confident in the application.

"People have been crying out for a cinema for many years now and this venue would be accessible to everyone as it is in the town centre and right next to the train and bus station.

"That said, I have been let down many times over the last three years so I am not going to get my hopes up too much," Mr Kilgour added.



## Council's £1.1m housing upgrade

A HOUSING investment programme worth over £1.1 million for the south-west Fife area has been approved by councillors.

Over the next year, the money will be spent on upgrading roofs, roughcasting, kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems installed by Fife Council.

## Dairy negotiations continue

NEGOTIATIONS ARE continuing with staff and unions over the possible culling of almost 70 jobs at a well-known Fife dairy depot.

discussions would continue beyond the deadline.

A final decision is not expected to be made imminently.

The dairy firm said it was

When the news emerged, group operations director Martyn Mulcahy insisted no decision would be made until the company engaged with staff representatives.

### Local digest

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