



South Tyneside Council

South Tyneside and Sunderland Joint Health Scrutiny Committee

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10 October 2017

Present: South Tyneside:
Councillors Dix (Chairman), Brady, Flynn, Hay, Hetherington, Peacock and Purvis

Sunderland:
Councillor Wright, Davison, Heron, Leadbitter, McClennan, DE Snowdon and Walker

In attendance: Caroline Latta (NHS England), Andrea Hetherington (NHS England), Mike Harding (Head of Legal Services South Tyneside Council), Nigel Cummings (Sunderland Council), Paul Baldasera (South Tyneside Council) and Brian Springthorpe (South Tyneside Council)

6 members of the public were in attendance

1. Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of 21 September 2017

Agreed: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2017 be approved.

4. Summary of evidence and issues raised to date

Prior to the presentation Members highlighted a number of points that had been raised during the consultation process:

- A number of concerns had been raised by the public during the public consultation;
- The Committee had still to meet with staff;
- A number of questions remained outstanding, including the information on patient transfers from North East Ambulance Service and its funding from the Clinical Commissioning Group;
- The CCG and Foundation Trusts had been unable to provide any information regarding the proposed changes to hospital services considered in 2005/06;
- Concern had been expressed that the proposals were levelling down service standards rather than raising standards, highlighted by the excellent standards of maternity services already provided at South Tyneside;
- Implementation plans and project plans were required to help the Committee judge the impact of the proposed changes on residents and local communities. Furthermore, field testing of transport assumptions still had to be completed;
- Members had repeatedly expressed concern over lack of funding for health services;
- It was acknowledged that CCG, NECS and Foundation Trust officers had been fully engaged in the scrutiny process but the role and involvement of Board members was questioned.

During discussion, it was recognised that a lot of expert views had been received, however, the Committee still wanted to take further evidence from medical staff involved in those services affected. A meeting had been organised with representatives from the Committee and staff from both hospitals.

A Member highlighted the issues over referral to the Secretary of State. The Head of Legal Services confirmed that correspondence had been received from Emma Lewell-Buck MP; however, it did not contain any further information regarding legal provisions for a referral to be made. Sunderland and South Tyneside Council's legal view remained that as the consultation had not yet concluded no referral could be made at this time to the Secretary of State.

A Member highlighted a 'mind map' of the work carried out so far by the Committee, the evidence received to date and options for each service. The 'mind map' could be used to collate all information available.

The Committee was then presented with a summary of the evidence gathered to date, key issues that had been raised, conclusions and recommendations:

- The options for each service were detailed in the presentation together with a timetable of the Committee's meetings and evidence gathered;
- The travel issues which would be faced by residents travelling to and from hospital for appointments or when visiting were stressed;
- Safety concerns were detailed, including transfer between hospitals and ambulance services;
- Questions remained over the viability, capacity and the future services available at both hospital sites;
- The impact on staffing at both hospitals had not been made clear. Concern had been raised over the lack of staff involvement in developing the options proposals;
- The next steps for the Committee and its place in the structure of North East health scrutiny structure were highlighted.

During discussion on transport, Members reiterated their concerns that the assumptions were made based on a desk top study and did not reflect the real time journeys faced by residents. Field testing of routes was deemed essential to validate journey times. A dedicated bus service between hospitals sites had also been raised during the consultation process. It was highlighted that bus operators had not been to a Committee meeting, however, it was confirmed that they had attended meetings with Officers, local authority, Nexus and user groups. Public transport users groups had been consulted as part of the Path to Excellence public consultation.

The safety of services had led to questions over midwife-led maternity units and the impact this would have on the number of births in South Tyneside and the sustainability of the unit. Members remained concerned over the transfer of patients when a birth became "high risk" from "low risk" and about the ability of the ambulance service to provide transport in such an emergency situation.

Members questioned the cost savings involved from the proposals. The Committee had been advised that the driver for change was not financial; however, everyone recognised the cuts being made to public sector budgets including the health service. Furthermore, the Committee had been advised that without the Alliance the hospitals would have faced a substantial financial deficit.

Trust was essential during the consultation process and a Member suggested that it was broken between staff and senior

management. Trust involved all parties – management, staff, trades unions, councillors and the public.

The Committee had been advised that services would transfer between both hospitals; however, under the current proposals services were only transferred from South Tyneside to Sunderland. Members had been advised that plans for future phases had not yet been developed so it could not be confirmed which services would transfer. In Members' opinion this appeared unlikely and put at risk the claim of an open and transparent consultation process as questions of future staffing numbers and skills, for example, could not be considered.

As a result of services moving from hospitals, it called into question the capacity at each site in terms of accommodation, staffing and car parking.

Caroline Latta, NHS England, made a number of responses summarised below:

- Path to Excellence had been considered by the Committee at a number of meetings since the proposals were developed;
- Work continued with organisations including the North East Ambulance Service, to develop to responses to issues raised during the public consultation and by the Committee;
- Officers from NHS England and the CCGs would continue to provide information as requested by the Committee including the provision of a workshop on a midwife-led maternity unit;
- A commitment was given to ensuring that lessons were learnt for future phases of consultation;
- The proposals were not a plan to make staff redundant as lack of staff was a key driver in the Path to Excellence. Management would continue to work with staff to deal with issues of concerns that materialised during the consultation process;
- The Committee would be advised of the outcome of the public consultation;
- Information would be given regarding the next phase in the New Year.

Agreed: (a) That the presentation be noted and (b) that further evidence be taken as necessary, including from North East Ambulance Service.

5. Consideration of the Committee's initial response to the Path to Excellence Consultation

The Committee discussed the formulation of its initial response to the Path to Excellence consultation. It was recognised that a final

response would be required early in the New Year following feedback from the consultation and the final proposals being presented.

Agreed: That a draft response be prepared by Officers in discussion with the Joint Chairs, to be circulated to all Members of the Committee, prior to it being submitted.

6. Chairman's Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

7. Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on 12 December 2017 at Sunderland Civic Centre.
