

Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

15 November 2007

Great Western Ambulance Trust – Joint Scrutiny

Purpose of Report

1. To update members about discussions held by the Chairmen of the Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Swindon Health Overview & Scrutiny Committees regarding scrutiny arrangements for the Great Western Ambulance Trust.

Background

2. Members have been informed, through previous Chairman's Announcements, that the Chairmen of the Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Swindon Health Overview & Scrutiny Committees have met to discuss the performance of the Great Western Ambulance Trust.
3. On 23 October a further meeting was held with the Chief Executive, the Head of Communications and the Patient & Public Involvement Manager to discuss a number of ongoing issues and whether formal joint scrutiny of the Trust may be the most effective way to continue.

Outcomes of the Chair's Meeting

4. At the meeting on 23 October the Chairmen raised a number of concerns with the Chief Executive of the Trust. These included:
 - Problems engaging with, and obtaining information from the Trust
 - The need for the OSCs to see performance monitoring data and PALS reports
 - The areas of concern highlighted by the recent review carried out by the National Ambulance Improvement Agency Report
 - Low morale among staff and the intervention of the Union on their behalf
5. The Chief Executive gave full and frank answers to the questions asked by the Chairs and there was discussion about how to improve communications and involvement in the future.
6. Several actions were agreed by the Chairs and the Chief Executive at the meeting as part of a long term aim to improve relations between health scrutiny and the Trust:
 - To allocate a member of the Trust's Communications Team to liaise with the Health OSCs

- Monthly performance charts to be submitted to each Health OSC via the relevant PCT
- A briefing session for all Health OSC members will be arranged in the New Year and with a further session for all Chairs and the Trust also being discussed
- Communications Officers will advise individual Health OSCs of any minor operational changes happening in their sector
- Patient & public involvement reports that go to the Trust Board will also come to Health OSCs
- Scrutiny Officers will provide details of wider stakeholder groups to assist the Trust with their communications
- Scrutiny Officers will go on the list for press releases from the Trust
- The Chief Executive will forward the action plan produced in response to the National Ambulance Improvement Agency Report to the Health OSCs along with a summary of the Trust's response linking to each of the issues raised in the report
- The three Chairmen agreed to carry out joint scrutiny of the Trust and to invite the other Health OSCs in the Great Western area to participate. This will be a formal joint scrutiny committee, bound by the legal and statutory requirements set out in the scrutiny guidance

Conclusions

7. The Wiltshire Health OSC has had concerns about the performance of the Great Western Ambulance Trust for a number of months, but has found it difficult to address those concerns with the Trust itself.
8. The importance of the Wiltshire PCT as the commissioner of ambulance services on behalf of the population of Wiltshire must be recognised and they must be involved in any further scrutiny activities.
9. The Great Western Ambulance Trust has agreed to provide better and more consistent information on performance and the patient experience.
10. The most effective way of scrutinising the Trust is through joint scrutiny with other Health OSCs as it allows members to look at the performance of the Trust as a whole, rather than isolating work to a particular geographical area. This is of particular relevance as there may be areas where the Trust will wish to consolidate activity in an area outside of the county.
11. Where changes affect the area covered by only one Health OSC, the Trust will still attend and update members.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- i. Note the outcomes of the meeting between the three Health OSC Chairmen and the Great Western Ambulance Trust.

- ii. Agree to pursue the development of a joint scrutiny committee to scrutinise the Great Western Ambulance Trust with Gloucestershire and Swindon Health OSCs and possibly other committee's in the Great Western area.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for the county council in this report.

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