



Wiltshire Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of a MEETING held at WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 9 NOVEMBER 2005

PRESENT: County Councillors; Dr J English, Mr J Osborn, Mrs J Rooke, Mrs M Groom, Mr J Noeken, Mrs P Rugg, Mr R While, Mrs M White. District Councillors; Mrs P Winchcombe, Mr M Hewitt, Mrs J Wood.

STAKEHOLDERS: Dr P Biggs (West Wilts PCT Patients Forum), Mr M Griffiths (Kennet & North Wiltshire Patient's Forum), Mrs J Cole (User & Carers' Network).

OTHERS: Mr J Taylor (Salisbury Healthcare Patient's Forum), Marie Laws (West Wiltshire District Council), June Sadd (Wiltshire & Swindon User's Network) Nicholas Gillard (Kennet, North & West Wiltshire PCTs), Ken Franks and Jo Howes (Wiltshire County Council)

Members of the public present: 1

52. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs B Wayman, Mr T White, Miss H Thompson and Ms D Hawken

53. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman announced that Gordon Cox has had to stand down as the West Wiltshire District Council as he has recently taken on an executive role there. West Wiltshire District Council will meet to appoint a new co-opted member. The Committee agreed that the Chairman should write to West Wiltshire District Council to thank Mr Cox for the valuable contribution he made to this committee.

The third Mainstreaming Mental Health event took place in Chippenham today and Jo Howes will circulate a briefing note to members.

Letters have been sent to the Department of Health by the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny and the West Wiltshire Patient & Public Involvement Forum, the Chief Executive of the Council and Dr English in a personal capacity. A reply has been received to the Leader's letter which has been judged by full Council to be wholly unsatisfactory. Mr Noeken queried whether the Secretary of State is giving any credence to the statutory responsibilities of Overview & Scrutiny.

On 8 November the County Council held a debate on health issues, which revealed that members' main concerns were about the implications of the serious financial position of many of the NHS Trusts in Wiltshire.

54. Member's Interests

Mr Osborn declared that he is a member of Trowbridge Hospital League of Friends.

55. Pathways for Change Task Group

The Chairman introduced the item and drew attention to the key findings, especially issues of transport and communication. He also highlighted the fact that the Task Group has asked for further info from the PCT and that this is expected shortly.

He then invited the members to enter into a debate.

Judy Rooke (JR) asked where the recommendations will go and what will happen. Jo Howes (JH) replied that, if the Committee agreed, the recommendations would be formally sent to the PCT who would then have twenty days to respond to state which recommendations they would be taking up and which they wouldn't, and why.

John English (JE) felt that the attitude of the PCT toward the work of the Task Group had been positive and was sure they would continue to co-operate. He also expressed a hope that the Pathways for Change project would not be compromised, as the process has been very thorough and interesting.

Jeff Osborn (JO) asked for clarity about what the Task Group would be doing next, whether it had finished looking at the closures of Bradford on Avon and Westbury hospitals and whether it had spoken to representatives from the towns. He also asked whether some form of mini assembly had been held in Bradford and Westbury, and noted that there seemed to be varying levels of communication across staff and members of the public. JH outlined the work of the Task Group and confirmed that people from Westbury had been interviewed and interviews with people from Bradford were yet to be arranged. Nicholas Gillard (NG) stated that there had been no mini assembly, but that the PCT has been meeting regularly with community planning groups, so there have been a number of meetings between assemblies. The PCT has agreed that representations from Bradford on Avon and Westbury can come to the next assembly to talk about the way forward in those communities.

JO was concerned about recommendation IV and felt communication to staff had been reasonable, but that members of the public were confused. NG stated that, to his knowledge, information had been issued to patients via GP surgeries, but that he would go back and make sure that enough had been done to reassure people while the staff consultation was underway.

Peter Biggs (PB) reiterated the importance of communication, even when there is no news, so that people can know that there is no news, but still be aware of timeframes. He felt that the PCT had not been forthcoming in this and he was unclear, for instance, how many people in Westbury really know that nothing will happen until March next year.

JO commented that local MPs had also muddied the picture and made mischief to some degree.

JE followed up on the points made by JO and PB and was concerned that local people, such as the Chair of the Westbury League of Friends who had been interviewed by the Task Group, felt very strongly that they had been betrayed and couldn't now take part with a clear conscience in Pathways for Change.

PW had two questions: is the Task Group looking into transport and has the RUH been involved in discussions.

JH answered that transport was a key theme through the interviews with local people and that the RUH were going to be contacted for their view on Pathways for Change. NG said the PCT is mapping current transport arrangements and that he is planning to hold a seminar to flush out all the transport issues on 07.12.05.

PR read a quote from the PCT's annual report which stated that the Board was unsure about whether it would achieve financial balance despite the steps taken to achieve this and commented that this is a situation partners need to be fully aware of. She felt the reply of the Secretary of State to the Leader of the Council was appalling and that the key parts of the Task Group's interim report were that people in the local communities felt they had been treated unfairly and that different people had received varying levels of communication.

Roy While (RW) said the Task Group would be hearing from the Director of Finance at the PCT.

PW stated that it was very sad that reports in the public interest published by the Audit Commission had taken a long time to get into the public domain and that people at the Board meeting on 31.08.05 knew the reports existed, but had not had opportunity to read them for themselves.

Jean Cole (JC) asked whether the Pathways for Change consultation would be beginning in December or January and expressed doubt that people would be able to take in any implications over Christmas. She also felt consultation documents should be as modern as possible and make use of flow charts and diagrams where possible.

RW said the committee was concerned about the timing of consultation and would not want to see anything start before the New Year.

NG noted the concern of the committee and stated that it remains the PCT's plan to get the document ready for mid December, but that it was likely that formal consultation wouldn't begin before the New Year.

PR asked if the committee would see the consultation document before it went out and NG agreed that it could and that he was making arrangements for the Independent Reconfiguration Panel to come and meet with the PCT, the Strategic Health Authority and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the OSC, to hear their view about the consultation before it begins.

JE made the point that the people of Wiltshire should not suffer as a result of Pathways for Change and that he was worried because of the splitting of the integrated management of health and social care.

June Wood (JW) was surprised that there could be any doubt about the consultation starting before Christmas and asked the PCT to think very seriously. NG confirmed that the mid December deadline for the consultation document is an internal deadline to ensure that the PCT is ready to begin

consultation in the New Year. NG agreed to formally take the view of the committee on the timing of the consultation back to the PCT.

PW pointed out that, as this issue was not on the agenda, the committee could not make any decision on the timing of the consultation and so could not be perceived to having “signed off” any aspect of the consultation at this stage.

Mike Hewitt (MH) proposed that the committee formally forward the recommendations of the Task Group to the PCT. Margaret White (MW) seconded this proposal and the motion was carried.

The Chairman declared the meeting formally closed and thanked all those who attended.

50. Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Committee is on 14 December 2005 at 14:30.

51. Urgent Items

None

(Duration of the meeting 14:30 – 15:30)

The officer who has produced these notes is Jo Howes, Health Scrutiny Officer within Democratic and Members’ Services, direct line (01225) 713004; Email johowes@wiltshire.gov.uk