



Wiltshire Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES of a MEETING held at WILTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL 19 SEPTEMBER 2006

PRESENT: County Councillors; Mrs M Groom, Mr W Moss, Mr J Osborn, Mrs J Rooke, Mrs P Rugg, Mr R While (Chair), Mrs M White. District Councillors; Mrs P Winchcombe (Kennet District Council), Mr M Hewitt & Mr P Paisey (Salisbury District Council), Mr E Manasseh (West Wiltshire District Council), Mrs J Wood (North Wiltshire District Council).

STAKEHOLDERS: Dr P Biggs (West Wilts PCT Patient's Forum), Mr M Griffiths (Kennet & North Wiltshire Patient's Forum), Mr T White (South Wilts Patient's Forum), Mrs J Cole (User & Carers' Network).

OTHERS: June Sadd, (Wiltshire & Swindon Users Network), Carl Beech, (Great Western Hospital), Jill Crooks (Wiltshire Gazette & Herald), Peter Wilson, Peter Brabner, Christine Reid, Laura McMurtrie (Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership Trust), Sally Sandcraft (South Wilts PCT), Nicholas Gillard, Shiena Bowen (Kennet & North and West Wilts PCTs) Chris Chorley, (WCC)

Members of the public present:

1. Apologies

Mrs Seager, Mandy Bradley, Miranda Gilmour, Helen Karn, Lyn Hill-Tout

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a true record.

3. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman announced that:

The Department of Health has given the go ahead for a new Independent Sector Treatment Centre at Devizes. This centre will be privately run, but will carry out routine procedures for NHS patients.

The three Wiltshire PCTs will merge to form a single PCT on 1 October 2006.

The County Council has appointed a new Director of Community Services, Sue Redmond, who will take up her post in November.

4. Member's Interests

Jeff Osborn – Chairman, Trowbridge Hospital League of Friends
Margaret White – Director, Health Advocacy Partnership

5. Public Participation

6. Pathways for Change

The Chairman introduced Nicholas Gillard (NG) and Shiena Bowen from Kennet & North and West Wilts PCTs.

NG acknowledged all the work carried out to execute both the recent consultations on Pathways for Change and Mainstreaming Mental Health and confirmed that the new PCT would come into being on 1 October 2006. It has been agreed that the new PCT with continuing responsibilities takes all decisions relating to both consultations and the new Board will meet within the first two weeks of October.

Members made a number of comments about the situation regarding the delayed decisions on Pathways for Change and pointed out that the engagement process began with a lot of credibility that has been steadily eroded by untimely hospital closures, delays in the start of the consultation and mixed messages regarding the need to make decisions prior to the PCT merger.

Members strongly urged the new PCT Board to set a timeframe for decision making as soon as possible.

There was some discussion about comments in the press that further consultation would be needed now that the Independent Treatment Centre in Devizes had been announced and members were also unclear about the true financial picture once the three PCTs merge, particularly in relation to the debt.

There was concern about the effect of further delays on staff, as well as on patients and carers. Committee members expressed concern that the PCT seemed to be in more confusion now than ever before.

The impact on social services and the need to involve the County Council social care providers in all discussions relating to the delay and reshaping of services was emphasised.

The Chairman summed up by reiterating that the committee expected to see a positive way forward for Pathways for Change, and echoing the sentiments of other members who had said that people cannot be expected to wait forever.

It was resolved to:

Write to the existing and the new PCTs, pressing for a timeframe for decision making and requesting early engagement from the PCT with the Pathways for Change Task Group.

7. Mainstreaming Mental Health

The Chairman asked Peter Wilson (PW), of Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership Trust (AWP), to update the committee on the Mainstreaming Mental Health Consultation.

PW informed the committee that the AWP Board had met on 25 August and agreed a number of recommendations to put to the PCTs regarding the future of services. It had also identified a number of areas which could not be agreed until decisions had been taken on the PCTs Pathways for Change consultation.

PW then took the committee through the proposals which were outlined in the Board report attached to the agenda. At this stage firm proposals concerned inpatient services for older adults and adults of working age and community services.

Members asked questions about the loss of beds and the impact of the PCT's delay in making decisions on Pathways for Change on Mainstreaming Mental Health and the ability of AWP to make key financial savings.

The new Chief Executive of AWP, Laura McMurtrie (LM) explained that the delay on decisions for Pathways for Change was unfortunate, but that AWP could manage the financial situation for another two to three months, although it is frustrating not to be able to give a full picture of how services would be reshaped.

Members asked a number of questions regarding the future of existing inpatient wards, the impact of uncertainty on users and carers and the need for adequate counselling services in GP practices.

It was resolved to:

Note the recommendations for the "stage 1" decisions that will be put to the Board of the new Wiltshire PCT in due course.

To write to the Wiltshire PCT to see a timeframe for decisions on Mainstreaming Mental Health and Pathways for Change at the earliest opportunity.

LM also gave a brief statement about the situation at Amblescroft in Salisbury, which is the subject of a dispute between AWP and the County Council. LM stated that AWP and WCC have been working closely together to transfer a number of agreed patients to more suitable accommodation, and it is hoped this will be completed by the end of the month. AWP is hopeful that this situation can be resolved without recourse to more formal action.

8. South Wiltshire PCT – Changes to the Management of Services Provided by the PCT

Sally Sandcraft, of South Wiltshire PCT (SW PCT), outlined the process the PCT has gone through to get to the point of proposals to the Board. The PCT had been looking into transferring its provider services for some time, but delays by the Strategic Health Authority had meant that the green light was given to go ahead in August 2006.

Work carried out by the PCT and the Patient & Public Involvement Forum had reached the conclusion that the changes proposed, to shift the management of the majority of staff to Salisbury Foundation NHS Trust, did not amount to a substantial variation in service and did not require formal public consultation. SW PCT Board is due to meet to discuss the outcomes of staff consultation on 25.09.06.

A copy of the responses from the staff consultation had been circulated with the agenda. Members were concerned with the responses from GPs who all seemed to be against the changes and queried what the proposals meant for the future of Practice Based Commissioning in the area if the community staff all worked for the foundation trust. The PCT is carrying out further work with GPs to try and encourage understanding and support. Concern was also expressed about the weighting, especially that given to working with partners.

Members also expressed concern about the wisdom of trying to complete this move just prior to the merger of the three Wiltshire PCTs, although it is understood that the final decision will be taken by the new PCT. It was felt that the wider implications for provider services as a whole had not been fully explored and that, in light of the imminent merger that should be established before decisions are taken.

It was resolved to:

Write to SW PCT and the new PCT to express the views of the committee.

9. National Framework for NHS Continuing Health Care and NHS Funded Nursing Care in England - Consultation

The Chairman introduced Chris Chorley (CC) of Wiltshire County Council (WCC) and stated that this was to be CC's last committee appearance before leaving the Council at the end of September. Mike Hewitt thanked CC for all his help with the Supporting People initiative over the years.

CC explained the background to the consultation. Continuing Health Care is ten years old this year and is under review because of concerns about what should be funded by the NHS and reports that people have to sell their property to fund care. There is also a variation in funding levels depending on where people live and the Department of Health is aiming to eradicate the postcode lottery. The consultation does not directly address the lawful limit of what councils have to provide, although at some point this will also be the subject of debate.

Members expressed concern about the gap between funding for health and funding for social care and fears that this gap is set to widen. There were further concerns that the current round of NHS reorganisation will again only last eighteen months, not giving time for new initiatives to bed in.

Members felt that use of a single assessment by an independent body would help to minimise disputes between health and social care providers about who should be funding the care of patients. It is understood that current practice allows the NHS to decide what it will or will not fund, without opportunity for meaningful challenge by local authorities with social services responsibilities.

It was resolved to:

Submit a letter of support for the County Council's response to the national consultation.

10. Changes to the Structure of Patient & Public Involvement

There was some discussion about the national changes to patient and public involvement structures, although it was noted that timeframes for these changes are still unclear.

It was resolved to:

Note the national and local changes to patient and public involvement structures.

Request that the PCT Patient & Public Involvement Forum for Wiltshire continues to be represented by each of the smaller sub-Forum groups configured around existing PCT boundaries.

Invite representatives of the Great Western Ambulance and AWP Patient & Public Involvement Forums to sit as stakeholders on the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

11. Work Programme & Health Scrutiny Support Programme

There was discussion about the work of the committee for the forthcoming months which was expected to remain focussed on Pathways for Change and Mainstreaming Mental Health until satisfactory conclusions to both consultations had been reached.

There was further discussion about the work programme, with members requesting time to plan how to review some of the existing work programme items as well as plan how to use the Health Scrutiny Support Programme days.

It was resolved to:

Carry out further research into concerns expressed by some dentists about the constraints placed on them by the NHS dentistry contract.

Arrange a dedicated meeting with the Great Western Ambulance Trust.

Form a working party for a one off meeting to discuss the HSSP days and the existing work programme items. The working party will consist of Paula Winchcombe, Peter Biggs, John English and Mike Hewitt.

(Duration of the meeting 10:30 – 13:00)

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