

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the North Warwickshire Area Committee held on 15 August 2006 at the Magistrate's Court Building, Sheepy Road, Atherstone

Present: -

Members of the Committee

Councillors

Ray Sweet (Chair)
Richard Grant (Vice Chair)
Anne Forwood
Peter Fowler
Colin Hayfield
Mick Stanley

Officers

Sarah Duxbury, Corporate Legal Services Manager
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator
Jane Pollard, Scrutiny Manager
Catherine Ball, Administrative Assistant North Warwickshire
Alison Williams, Area Manager North Warwickshire

Also in Attendance

M. Blackburn, J.A. Hopkins and J. Marshall (Mancetter PC)
J.E. Pickworth (Nether Whitacre PC).
Julie Whittaker and Simon Crews (North Warks PCT)

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Joan Lea and Brian Moss.

(2) Members' Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests

Members declared personal interests as set out below:

- (1) by virtue of them serving as North Warwickshire Borough Councillors as follows:-

Councillors Peter Fowler, Colin Hayfield, Mick Stanley and Ray Sweet.

- (2) Councillor Colin Hayfield as a non-Executive Director of the North Warks PCT.

- (3) Councillor Richard Grant as the Chair of the Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board.

2. A summary of the Coventry & Warwickshire Acute Services Review Consultation Proposals

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, which summarised the key proposals from the Acute Services Review Consultation Document. The Health Overview and Scrutiny was asking the Committee to consider the benefits and drawbacks of the proposals being made for their local area looking specifically at access to services and transport. This report had been deferred from the Committee's 26 July 2006 meeting because the North Warwickshire PCT representative had been unable to be present on that day because of ill health. (A copy of the draft minute relating to that item was circulated).

The Chair introduced Julie Whittaker and Simon Clews, representatives of the North Warwickshire PCT, and asked that they take on board the comments and concerns expressed by Members.

Simon Clews presented the proposals (with the aid of a power point presentation). He explained that the reason for the Review was to organise the county's hospitals so that they could meet future challenges and survive. The three main challenges were –

(1) Government Policy -

- The impact on local services and how they were delivered;
- Moving towards community care and competition from the independent sector
- Working time directives and funding and managing hospitals as businesses.

(2) Health Care Development –

- Centralise specialist care and increase more day cases.
- Shorten length of stay in highly specialist care units.
- Provide more specialist treatment and high technology services.

(3) Local Issues –

- Over provision of hospitals in Coventry and Warwickshire.
- Financial deficit in Warwickshire
- The need for specialist services in Coventry to attract and maintain staff.

In summary the Review's aims were to -

- (1) Keep most care local;
- (2) Keep all A&E services;
- (3) Not close any hospital or services;

- (4) Allow the George Eliot Hospital to concentrate on providing well over 80% of all hospital care to local people and to continue to develop services for the local population.

During the ensuing discussion Members comments were noted relating to the issues listed below -

Transport and Car Parking

- (1) The Review had not taken into account the transport needs of patients and their families who lived in the north of the county, particularly those people who did not have their own transport and could not afford to pay for transport to the University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW). Poor transport links also made access to the UHCW difficult.
- (2) Car parking provision at the UHCW was inadequate and costly.
- (3) The estimated travel times from areas north of the county to the UHCW were incorrect.
- (4) The Review proposals limit rather than expand patients' choice of hospital because of increased transport costs?

In response Simon Clews and Julie Whittaker -

- Acknowledged that transport was an issue that had been continually raised during the consultation process and which the Board was addressing.
- More car parking would be available at the UHCW when the old Walsgrave Hospital was demolished.
- Currently patients had a choice of five hospitals locally but the Government's proposal next year would widen this choice of hospital to anywhere in the country.
- Procedures had already been set in place to enable minor surgery to be carried out in G.P.'s surgeries in rural areas. The Government was promoting a range of services to be provided by G.P.s which including preventative work screening for particular conditions and giving advice on smoking and obesity.

24-Hour Emergency Service

- (1) Concern was expressed about what would happen to patients who required emergency treatment during the night and the potential increased risk to patients.

- (2) A Mancetter PC representative questioned whether the transfer times from the George Eliot Hospital during the night and for those emergencies which resulted in patients being taken direct to UHCW might lead to an increase in the number of fatalities.

In response Simon Clewes and Julie Whittaker said that -

- Warwickshire had very skilled ambulance teams who were also trained paramedics. These skilled teams would make judgements about which hospital was the most appropriate for each patient and, for most patients this would be the George Eliot. The most serious cases would, however, be taken to the UHCW.
- Models elsewhere in the country supported this proposal and found that it worked very well with good clinical outcomes.

Funding for home Care (freeing up of hospital beds)

Had the Review taken into account the funding implications for those patients, particularly the elderly, who were sent home and required on going medical and long term care and assistance to live at home?

In response Simon Clewes and Julie Whittaker said that the provision of nursing care and services in the community would require careful planning and a transfer of funding with the transfer of this type of work. Funding could also be provided for contracting out work to other service providers.

Loss of Experience Specialists/Specialist Care

- (1) Concern was expressed that the UHCW was attracting the experienced and specialist doctors and this would lead in the future to a greater reduction in services at the smaller hospitals.
- (2) The proposals would lead to the loss of paediatric and maternity care at the George Eliot.

In response Simon Clews said that –

- Ambulatory, 'day-care' would be developed at all five hospitals and this would include a wide range of procedures.
- Paediatric day care would still continue at the George Eliot Hospital but overnight care would be provided at the UHCW. Complex and specialist services, that involved only a small number of patients, would be provided at the UHCW.
- Research had shown that many children who required a high level of care did much better being cared for at home.
- Maternity and paediatric care would still be maintained at George Eliot Hospital but emergency and acute care dealt with at the UHCW.

During further discussion Councillor Richard Grant said that medicine had advanced and many people welcomed the challenges, but were not comfortable with change. He asked for re-assurances about the issues raised by Members.

The Chair, in summary, said that the Area Committee was severely concerned about -

- (1) Transport for people in the north of the county.
- (2) The change in Acute Services – the view of residents in the north of the county being that the George Eliot Hospital worked well and should not be changed;
- (3) Any reduction in services.

The Chair thanked Simon Clewes and Julie Whittaker for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions and the Parish Council representatives for attending and making their views known.

Resolved that the Area Committee, having considered the benefits and drawbacks of the proposals being made by the Acute Services Review –

- (1) Asks that its comments be fed into the formal consultation process;
- (2) Requests that the public is given full re-assurance that the healthcare they receive from the changed arrangements will be of the best quality and that appropriate transport arrangements will be put in place.

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Chair of Committee

The Committee rose at 7:30 p.m.