

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
18 July 2018

SCRUTINY OF HEALTH COMMITTEE – STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

Since my last statement to Council, the Scrutiny of Health Committee formally met on 22 June 2018 and reviewed the following:

NHS Finances

Commissioners and providers of NHS health services that are used by the people of North Yorkshire were invited to attend the committee and give an overview of their current financial position and plans that have been developed to recover any deficits. The committee was concerned to learn that the four Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) that cover most of the population of North Yorkshire had a total deficit in 2017/18 of £46 million and that the projected deficit for 2018/19 could be at least £31 million.

The projected savings include measures such as demand management including the withdrawal medical procedures which are now out to consultation, closer working between commissioners and providers, better management of workforce, a strategic review of estates and clinical services and work on management of prescribing. At this stage, I am not confident that this will be enough to bring the budgets back into balance.

The Department of Health funding formula disadvantages a rural county like North Yorkshire, where people live longer with multiple and often complex health conditions. Also, the way that health services are organised in the county means that there is insufficient scale to tackle many of the health problems that exist.

The committee has written to the Prime Minister and Simon Stevens, the Chief Executive of NHS England, to highlight their concerns about the management of NHS funding in the county. In particular, urging that any additional funding for health services is subject to robust audit to help ensure that it is used effectively and efficiently and not just to provide a temporary stop-gap for local deficits.

Friarage

The work to develop a sustainable model for the delivery of Emergency Medicine and Anaesthesia at the Friarage is still ongoing. It is anticipated that there will be a public consultation on possible service models in the autumn but this has yet to be confirmed. I have learnt, having attended a meeting of the Durham Darlington Tees and Hambleton Richmondshire and Whitby STP Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, that the finalisation of options for the Friarage has been delayed by a lack of consensus amongst clinicians in the North East about how best to provide services across the James Cook Hospital, the Darlington Memorial Hospital and North Tees. This delay is concerning, as is the apparent inability of the head of the Integrated Care System for the North East and Cumbria to resolve disputes between clinicians in his organisation.

Access to NHS dental services

In response to concerns raised by Members, the committee requested that NHS England attend to explain how NHS dental services are commissioned and what is being done to alleviate any gaps in provision in the county as and when it arises.

Once again, the challenges faced relate to under-funding and workforce shortages. In many areas of the county it is difficult to attract the range of skilled dental practitioners needed to support service provision. Also, the funding formula is such that there is a dis-incentive for dental practices, which are commercial enterprises, to take on people who have high levels of need for dentistry as a NHS patient.

Castleberg, Settle

On a more positive note, I am pleased to see that on the 8 May 2018 the governing body of the Airedale Wharfedale and Craven CCG decided to support the proposal that the Castleberg hospital be re-opened once repairs had been undertaken. Also included was the recommendation that the Castleberg is developed as a community based facility with options for a broader range of support services, particularly the voluntary sector.

Mental health services

The committee has been informed that the closure of the mental health in-patient beds at the Friarage in Northallerton is still planned but cannot proceed until space is available at the Roseberry park site in Middlesbrough. The Roseberry Park site is undergoing investigative works to assess what corrective actions are needed to the structure of the buildings. It is unlikely that any patient transfers will be able to take place until the end of 2018.

The pause in the build of a new mental health in-patient facility at Cardale Park in Harrogate continues. A number of options are being to be developed for the use of the site as a base for mental health services, of which an in-patient hospital is only one. Public consultation on options is anticipated in the autumn.

Integrated Care Systems

The development of the Integrated Care Systems for the North East and Cumbria and West Yorkshire and Harrogate is gaining momentum.

West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership – it has been confirmed that they will join the Integrated Care System Development Programme Wave 2. This is national recognition for the progress that they have made to date in developing a plan for health improvement and health services for the 2.6 million people in their area.

North East and Cumbria Integrated Care System – this is one of the largest systems in the country stretching from Thirsk to the Scottish borders and covers a population of 3.1 million. The intention is that the ICS is formally adopted in April 2019.

Humber Coast and Vale – this system has yet to formally release its plans. The focus is upon developing the partnership that will drive health service developments and identifying localities within the footprint that make sense.

This is the largest reorganisation in the history of the NHS but past experience indicates that the people of North Yorkshire never do particularly well out of major, top-down reorganisations.

Cllr Jim Clark

Chairman, Scrutiny of Health Committee, 2 July 2018