

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

22 July 2020

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE SCRUTINY OF HEALTH COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny of Health Committee has a responsibility to review any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the County. A key part of that responsibility is requiring NHS bodies to consult health scrutiny on proposals for substantial developments or variations to the local health service provision. One of the powers that the committee has is, in specific circumstances, to refer contested proposals for change to the Secretary of State for Health.

The Scrutiny of Health Committee last met in public on 13 March 2020. Ten days after that meeting, we were in lockdown and all public gatherings banned. Whilst the full committee has not met in public, there have been regular updates to the members regarding the work of local commissioners and providers and also briefings to the Chairman from Executive Members, the Director of HAS and senior NHS leaders on key issues. There has also been follow up on the recovery plan that the Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS FT put in place following the CQC inspection of the Trust in September to November 2019, where a rating of 'requires improvement was given'. There is an appetite amongst the committee to meet again and so over the summer months we will build up our scrutiny activity to the point where we meet, formally and in public in the early autumn with a live broadcast meeting.

At the meeting of the committee on 13 March 2020, the following matters relating to the NHS locally were scrutinised.

Coronavirus pandemic

We received an update on the actions being taken by the NHS locally to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic. In mid-March, the focus of the Government was upon the 'delay' phase of the response. The key message was that anyone with influenza like symptoms should self-isolate for 7 days. All non-urgent hospital procedures were being delayed and elective surgery was being reviewed. At that point, the scale of the pandemic and the realities of the national response were not apparent. The point was made that there was a need to ensure that the response to the pandemic was proportionate and that it did not cause more health problems than it prevented. This is something that the committee will look into as part of an overall review of the local response to the pandemic that is likely to involve all of the Council's five thematic overview and scrutiny committees, to a greater or lesser extent.

Across all areas of overview and scrutiny, the decision was taken to adopt a light-touch approach and not to unnecessarily burden NHS and Council staff with requests for reports, briefings and updates. The concern was that this would divert them from the work that they needed to do to tackle the pandemic.

The Friarage Hospital, Northallerton

The committee has tracked the development and implementation of an Urgent Treatment Centre at the Friarage Hospital for the past 2 years. This has been a detailed and extensive piece of scrutiny work. The new model was adopted on 27 March 2019 and has now been in place for 15 months. A 12-week consultation commenced on 13 September 2019, with a pause for the General Election. The intention had been to review the outcome of the consultation at the committee meeting that was scheduled for 24 April 2020 and then to review the decision of the Clinical Commission Group (CCG) Governing Body at the meeting that was scheduled for 19 June 2020. This was not possible due to the lockdown and the decision

made at the outset to take a light-touch approach to scrutiny during the pandemic and not to place an unnecessary burden on colleagues in the NHS. Instead, the decision made by the CCG Governing Body and the rationale for it, along with the view of the Clinical Senate for Yorkshire and Humber, was shared with the committee and members given a chance to respond with any queries or concerns that they may have had. In summary, the view was that the changes were necessary to ensure patient safety and the long term sustainability of services at the Friarage Hospital.

A verbal update on the performance of the Urgent Treatment Centre will be provided at an informal briefing session that is being held for committee members on 16 July 2020. The performance of the Urgent Treatment Centre and patient outcomes will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

East Coast Services Update

The committee received an update from commissioners on the progress being made with the East Coast Review and what this means for Scarborough General Hospital. The key areas of work being looked at through the review are Emergency and Acute Medicine, Stroke, Urology and Paediatrics/Obstetrics. This is developing into a significant piece of scrutiny work for the committee. The review of stroke services has generated significant concern locally. The review being undertaken by the NHS locally is complex as Scarborough Hospital does not stand alone but is part of an interconnected health system, where its relationship with hospitals in York, Whitby, Beverley and Middlesbrough needs to be taken into account.

The East Coast Review was paused during the pandemic and we anticipate that the work will start again in the next weeks.

A verbal update will be provided at the informal briefing session that is being held for committee members on 16 July 2020.

Whitby Hospital

An update was provided on the refurbishment and redevelopment of the existing Whitby Hospital site. At that point in time, the work was due to start on 23 March 2020. Clearly, the national lockdown has since caused delays. The committee will have oversight of the work being done to develop the Whitby Hospital site and services, as the hospital continues to play a key role in the health and social care system on the east coast.

Future meetings of the committee

The aim is for the committee to meet formally and in public in the early autumn with a live broadcast meeting. Ahead of this, the work programme will be reviewed to ensure that it remains relevant and current in view of the changes that have been brought about by the pandemic and the response of organisations to it.

On a final point, I would like to take this opportunity to praise the NHS's response locally to the pandemic, which has been non-bureaucratic, innovative and collaborative. We are fortunate to have such dedicated public servants.

COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN ENNIS
Chairman of the Scrutiny of Health Committee
30 June 2020