

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

18 November 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 continued to meet informally over the summer. A private committee briefing was held via Skype on 16 July 2020. At that meeting, committee members received updates on the proposed changes to the Healthy Child programme that is commissioned and provided by the Council, an update on the progress with the East Coast Review and planned capital investment in Scarborough Hospital, and details of how the Urgent Treatment Centre at the Friarage has been performing.

The committee met formally and in public on 11 September 2020 using Skype for a live broadcast. At that meeting, committee members received detailed presentations on: the £40m capital investment in Scarborough Hospital; and NHS pandemic recovery planning.

A Mid Cycle Briefing was held using Microsoft Teams on 21 October 2020, with Cllrs Colling and Solloway and I in attendance. The Mid Cycle Briefings offer the Chair, Vice Chair and Group Spokespersons an opportunity to develop the committee work programme and determine how proposed changes to NHS services locally can best be scrutinised. At the Mid Cycle Briefing, a total of six items were considered: the long term suitability of the existing Airedale Hospital and proposals for a new build on the existing site; the development of primary care in an around Easingwold; progress with the integration of health and social care services through the Harrogate and Rural Alliance; the development of the Catterick Health Campus; a review of urgent care pathways in York and the surrounding area; the changes to Public Health England and what this may mean at a local level; and progress with the implementation of an improvement plan for Scarborough Hospital, following a CQC inspection in January 2020.

The large number of issues raised at the Mid Cycle Briefing reflects the fact that the last 7 months of the pandemic has led to a fundamental re-think in how health services are delivered.

Whilst all of the above merit scrutiny and will be reviewed over the coming months, there are a number of areas which demand a strong focus and so will be subject to more detailed and intensive consideration. As such, I have highlighted them as below.

Scarborough Hospital

There are ongoing concerns amongst people living in the east of the county regarding the future of Scarborough Hospital and what services will be delivered there. The committee has been pleased to note that £40m in capital investment has been secured that will enable the existing site to be significantly expanded and modernised. The committee has also been assured that an Accident and Emergency service will remain on the site. One of the causes of the public disquiet appears to be a failure by the York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and commissioners to articulate a compelling vision of the future of the hospital, at a time when a number of smaller, specialist services have been or may be moved to York and

other regional centres. In addition, an unannounced inspection of the Emergency Department at Scarborough Hospital carried out by the Care Quality Commission on 13 and 14 January 2020 gave an overall rating of 'inadequate'.

The committee continues to be heavily involved in the scrutiny of service changes at Scarborough Hospital, the quality of care and the plans for the future development of the site. The committee will also work closely with the Scarborough and Whitby Area Constituency Committee to ensure that local members are engaged in the scrutiny process and able to feed in issues raised by local people.

The committee does not have a role to play in responding to individual complaints about the quality of NHS services. There is a role for the committee, however, in seeing whether individual complaints are indicative of larger scale failings in NHS services, which can then be followed up through scrutiny with the relevant provider and/or commissioner. It is also important that people are made aware of how they can raise concerns regarding their care, whether this is directly with the provider or through services and organisations such as Healthwatch and the Independent Health Complaints and Advocacy Service in North Yorkshire.

Airedale Hospital

Airedale General Hospital was opened in July 1970 and at that point had an expected 30-year lifespan. This year, it celebrates its 50th anniversary. The building is almost entirely constructed of Siporex, a form of aerated concrete. The Chief Executive of Airedale NHS Foundation Trust has expressed his concerns about the long-term structural integrity of the existing Airedale Hospital, particularly as an alert was issued by the Standing Committee on Structural Safety in May 2019 relating to aerated concrete, whereby a roof of this construction collapsed without warning at a school

The Foundation Trust has not been included in the list of 40 hospitals prioritised for funding to support rebuilding and development by the Government. Instead, they will have to enter a competitive process along with a number of other hospitals. It is of note that Airedale is one of a number of hospitals built in the late 1960s and early 1970s that has this form of concrete throughout its structure and yet it is the only one that is not automatically receiving Government funding for a re-build.

There is a real risk that should the funding not be awarded through the competitive process, then the hospital would have to close in a number of years' time on safety grounds and patients potentially be directed to Bradford Teaching Hospital or East Lancashire Hospital.

In my role as Chairman of the Scrutiny of Health committee, I will be writing to local MPs and the Secretary of State to highlight our concerns about the risk posed to a key service for the people of Craven and lower Richmondshire and to request that capital funding is made available for the re-build of the hospital on the existing site as a matter of urgency.

NHS response to the pandemic

The committee is undertaking a structured piece of scrutiny work looking at the NHS response to the first wave of the pandemic, how this has changed the way in which services are being delivered and what lessons have been learned. What has been most striking is the way that the pandemic has changed the way in which patients interact with medical services.

The emphasis has moved firmly away from face-to-face visits to remote access and the use of a 'total triage' system whereby the following process has been adopted: 1) speak to someone on the phone; 2) see someone virtually; 3) face to face consultation. From

discussions with commissioners, I understand that only 15% of consultations undertaken by GPs are currently face-to-face. The concern here is that the emphasis is upon the patient to articulate their health concerns in such a way that assists the medical practitioner with a diagnosis, when they are not being seen in person. Another outcome of remote working is that the lower volumes of people attending medical sites prompts primary care to re-think how it utilises its estate and facilities, particularly as the emerging Primary Care Networks prompt closer working between practices. This year we have seen the closure of the Hampsthwaite surgery, the closure of the Prospect Road Surgery in Scarborough and the proposed closure (now on hold indefinitely) of the Dacre Banks surgery.. I suspect that we will see more closures of smaller and older surgeries over time.

Committee meeting on 18 December 2020

The next meeting of the committee will be at 10am on 18 December 2020. At this time, the items for consideration at that meeting are as follows: progress with the public consultation on the proposed changes to the Healthy Child programme; an update on actual and proposed changes to some specialist services at Scarborough Hospital; the performance of in-patient and community mental health services in the county and the implementation of enhanced services in the community; and the further consideration of the NHS response to the pandemic.

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