

SCRUTINY MATTERS AND REVIEWS UNDERTAKEN BY THE COMMISSION

58/06 - **HEALTHCARE COMMISSION'S ANNUAL HEALTH CHECK:** In relation to the Healthcare Commission's Annual Health Check process, the Chair welcomed Jane Barnes, Chief Executive of Yorkshire Ambulance Service, Vince Larvin, Assistant Director Yorkshire Ambulance Service and John Mills to address the Commission. Jane Barnes advised that there had been a reconfiguration of the Ambulance Service in July 2006 and the organisation was currently undergoing a restructure. Since the reconfiguration the service employed approximately 5,000 staff, it covered 7,500 square miles and served a population of approximately 5 million. Current issues related to performance which continued to grow with a 12% increase in category A calls, which were 999 calls that were classed as critically or very ill, and that there was a target of attending these calls within 8 minutes. Regarding response times to 999 calls, it was noted that there was a target of 75% and that in North Yorkshire 71% were met within the 8 minutes. She also referred to the current concerns relating to the service and, in particular, the uncertainty over competitive tendering for the patient transport service.

John Mills then commented upon the regulatory processes and policies which governed the way in which the Ambulance Service operated and emphasised that although the financial position of the Ambulance Service was classed as 'weak', key work was being undertaken to improve this.

Questions were then invited. Members raised concerns over the change in the eligibility criteria for patient transport and the affect it had had on Community Transport. It was **agreed** that Vince Larvin would liaise with Community Transport in this regard. It was emphasised that this should be undertaken as a partnership. Referring to a query regarding hoax calls, it was acknowledged that the number of 'regular' callers needed to be reduced and that there were approximately 508,000 callers per year to Yorkshire Ambulance Service. Concerns were also raised over the current financial situation of the Ambulance Service and Jane Barnes acknowledged this and stated that it was a serious issue and one which had been inherited as a result of the reconfiguration. However, a three year plan had been adopted to reduce this debt and there would be some redundancies at senior management level. One Member enquired as to whether there were plans to close any of the ambulance depots/control rooms. Jane Barnes reported that they were not looking at closing any of the existing depots and added that they were looking at enhancing the standby points which currently served the District, which were fully equipped cars. They were looking at introducing five star standby points in the form of porta kabins with toilets and other facilities. Regarding the control rooms, she advised that these were currently located in Rotherham, Wakefield and York, however, it was intended that the Rotherham control room would be closed down. It was also acknowledged that the current accident and emergency fleet was very good but the patient transport fleet needed improving.

The Chair thanked the Ambulance Service representatives for attending the meeting and providing the Commission with the opportunity of considering local ambulance

service issues.

(5.33 pm - 6.09 pm)