

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 20 September 2010.

PRESENT: Mr G A Horne MBE (Chairman), Mr B R Cope (Vice-Chairman), Mr A D Crowther, Mr G Cooke, Mr D S Daley, Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mrs E Green, Mr C P Smith, Mrs J Whittle, Mr A T Willicombe, Cllr J Cunningham, Cllr M Lyons, Mr A R Chell (Substitute for Mrs J A Rook), Cllr Ms A Blackmore (Substitute for Cllr Mrs M Peters) and Mrs P A V Stockell (Substitute for Mr R Tolputt)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M Cayzer, Ms Davies, Cllr R Davison, Mr D Fowle, Ms T Gailey, Mr R Kenworthy, Mr R A Marsh, Miss N Miller and Mr M Willis

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P D Wickenden (Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Women's and Children's Services at Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust *(Item 4)*

1 (1) The Committee had before them a report which set out for the Committees information the ongoing events/dialogue on the implementation of the Women's and Children's Services within the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust.

(2) The report set out for the consideration of the Committee commentary on the stakeholder events. The reports concluded that the majority of the points of referral made by the Committee to the former Secretary of State for Health Andy Burnham remained unresolved through the process the new Secretary of State Andrew Lansley CBE had set in motion when responding to the Committee on 1 July 2010.

(3) Likewise the Committee concluded that the four additional tests on which this reconfiguration was to be adjudged:-

- (a) Support from GP commissioners;
- (b) Strengthened public and patient engagement;
- (c) Clarity on the clinical evidence base; and
- (d) Consistency with current and prospective patient choice

could not be met - in particular support from the GP commissioners and strengthened public and patient engagement.

(4) Members of the Committee welcomed the opportunity they had been afforded to attend all the stakeholder events and noted the importance the co-design group at the Hop Farm on 22 September 2010 which they viewed as significant in terms of the preparation of the report from Mr Lansley by the Strategic Health Authority.

(5) Tabled at the meeting was a letter the Chairman of the Committee had received from Mr N Chard the Cabinet Member for Environment Highways and Waste regarding the A228 link between Maidstone Hospital and Pembury Hospital; a letter from Julia Ross Director of Strategy and Communications for NHS West Kent who had been conducting the stakeholder events on behalf of the South East Coast Strategic Health Authority requesting that the contents of her letter in which she stated that the report before the Committee was not entirely factually correct should be taken into account, and a letter the Chairman had written to Guy Boersma, Director of Commissioning and System Development who was preparing the report for Mr Lansley asking that the report before the Committee and this minute is appended to the report unaltered and an embargoed copy of the report be made available to the Chairman prior to publication (see Appendix 1 to these Minutes).

(6) During the debate the majority of Members spoke with passion about the opportunity of retaining Women's and Children's Service at Maidstone Hospital as it looked unlikely that the four additional tests set by Mr Lansley and in particular (a) support from GP commissioners would be met.

(7) One Member felt strongly that whilst it was right for the Committee to support the residents of Maidstone and the surrounding area he had some difficulty in supporting the conclusion of the Chairman's report as on two occasions in 2005 (a Joint Select Committee) and earlier this year the Task and Finish Group (and subsequently the Committee) had approved and endorsed the reconfiguration of Women's and Children's Services for Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust. The Chairman invited Mr Wickenden to confirm that this was factually correct. Mr Wickenden confirmed that it was and drew the Members attention to the provision within the Constitution that the Council and Committee could not rescind a decision taken in the previous six months. The six months had just expired. Mr Wickenden also advised that circumstances had changed as Mr Lansley in his letter of 1 July had invited to stakeholders to endeavour to reach local resolution on the points of referral made by the Committee as well as applying the four additional tests – which were entirely new – therefore the situation had changed significantly. The Committee agreed that it was right and proper that the item was before the Committee as the Committee had been invited by the Secretary of State Mr Lansley to participate in the process and it was the Committees referral issues which were being addressed.

(8) One Member referred to some independent research statistics/indicces which demonstrated the make up and needs of the population which look to Maidstone Hospital for their services and the population which will look to Pembury Hospital for their Services (this information on deprivation is available at www.kent.gov.uk/research).

(9) The Committee noted that for the general public the meeting at Maidstone Leisure Centre on 9 September 2010 represented the sole general public event to date. At the conclusion of this meeting there was overwhelming support for the retention of consultant led Women's and Children's Services at Maidstone Hospital.

(10) Mrs Stockell informed the Committee that Maidstone Borough Councils Partnerships and Well Being External Scrutiny Committee which she chaired had at their meeting on 17 September 2010 resolved:-

.... (a) It believes it is in the best interests of the residents of Maidstone and the surrounding area, that consultant-led Women's and Children's Services should remain at Maidstone Hospital; and

(b) It asks that the Secretary of State for Health takes the decision on the reconfiguration proposals as soon as possible and concludes, in the best interests of the people of Maidstone and the surrounding area, that Maidstone Hospital should retain consultant-led Women's and Children's Services.

(11) Having taken into account all the evidence made available to the Committee and observed since Mr Lansley's process was put into place on 1 July 2010 the Committee concluded that achieving local resolution to the points of referral made to the Secretary of State for Health by the Committee on 24 February 2010 had not proved possible and opposition to the proposals and the impact on the provision of Women's and Children's services at Maidstone Hospital had continued to grow.

(12) The Committee considered very carefully the four new criteria which the Secretary of State for Health had asked to be addressed (see sub-paragraph (3) above). The Committee has taken into account the views of the GP commissioners in the Maidstone area who are overwhelmingly opposed to the removal of a consultant led maternity and paediatric service at Maidstone Hospital.

(13) Many of the original points of referral by the Committee remain unresolved and it was the Committee's view could not be resolved locally. For these reasons and recognising that there was still ten days remaining before the report was required by the Secretary of State for Health the Chairman moved from the chair seconded by Mrs Stockell: that

“(a) this report and the minute of this meeting are included as an unaltered addendum to the report the South East Coast Strategic Health Authority is preparing for the Secretary of State for Health;

(b) in a separate letter to the Secretary of State for Health the Chairman will request that he instigates a full review of this reconfiguration by the Independent Reconfiguration Panel or takes the decision himself to resolve the issue for the residents of Kent and in particular Maidstone and the surrounding area; and

(c) this Committee (which serves all the residents of Kent) support the residents of Maidstone and the surrounding area for the retention of consultant led Women's and Children's Services at Maidstone Hospital and asks that a decision is taken as soon as possible in the best interest of the people of Kent.”

Carried - 12 votes for- 0 votes against and 3 abstentions

(14) RESOLVED:- That

(a) this report and the minute of this meeting are included as an unaltered addendum to the report the South East Coast Strategic Health Authority is preparing for the Secretary of State for Health;

(b) in a separate letter to the Secretary of State for Health the Chairman will request that he instigates a full review of this reconfiguration by the Independent Reconfiguration Panel or takes the decision himself to resolve the issue for the residents of Kent and in particular Maidstone and the surrounding area; and

(c) this Committee (which serves all the residents of Kent) support the residents of Maidstone and the surrounding area for the retention of consultant led Women's and Children's Services at Maidstone Hospital and asks that a decision is taken as soon as possible in the best interest of the people of Kent.

2. Date of next programmed meeting – Friday 8 October 2010 @ 10:00am

(Item 5)