

Item 10: HOSC and the Local Dimension.

By: Peter Sass, Head of Democratic Services

To: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 14 October 2011

Subject: HOSC and the Local Dimension

1. Introduction

- (a) The remit of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of health and social care services in the area of the Committee's Local Authority. Within the area covered by the remit of the Kent HOSC are 12 Borough, City, or District Councils, each with important, and sometimes distinct, health issues which the HOSC could legitimately consider.
- (b) One of the main challenges for the HOSC to consider is how to balance the necessary focus on the strategic issues which affect the whole of the County with the need to make certain the local dimension is captured and important issues not neglected. Key to this is ensuring that the priority health issues across the County are raised and considered in the right forum at the right time. This is in line with the policy direction of national and local government in recent years with the increased emphasis on local engagement and decision making.

2. Current Practice

- (a) There are a number of ways in which the HOSC already works to capture the local dimension, including:
 - 1. Alongside 12 County Members with constituencies across the authority, HOSC has 4 Borough, City, or District Councillors on the Committee. It has also been the practice of this Committee to allow any interested Councillor to participate in the debates and raise issues.
 - 2. HOSC has increased capacity by allowing for the establishment of informal HOSC Liaison Groups to consider issues in more detail outside of formal meetings. The informal nature of the Groups allows for Borough, City, or District Councillors who are not Members of HOSC to participate in them.
 - 3. Communications with key stakeholders has been enhanced through the introduction of periodic HOSC Notes.
 - 4. There are 2 LINK non-voting Members of HOSC who are able to bring forward issues.

3. Key Questions and Considerations

- (a) Moving beyond this, there are a number of key questions for the Committee to consider:
1. How can HOSC be kept aware of the health issues of concern at the Borough, City, and District level?
 2. How can HOSC best keep Borough, City, and District Councils informed of the work it is carrying out?
 3. Which health topics are best scrutinised at countywide HOSC level, and which would benefit from being scrutinised more locally?
- (b) These questions need to be discussed against the background of the changes arising from the NHS White Paper, including:
1. The establishment of a number of Clinical Commissioning Groups which will largely take over the role of the current Kent and Medway wide PCT Cluster. There are 8 across Kent at present and a number of these are likely to cross one or more Borough, City, or District boundary.
 2. The establishment of the Health and Wellbeing Board as a Committee of the Council and the role it will carry out.
 3. The transfer of public health functions from the NHS to KCC.
 4. The transition from the Kent LINK to HealthWatch.
 5. Developments within local government, such as Locality Boards.
 6. The broader changes to the way the health economy functions which may have an impact on the way in which HOSC carries out its role.
- (c) Any suggestions as to how HOSC can best capture the local dimension will also need to bear in mind the four principles which underpin the Protocol for Health Overview and Scrutiny within the KCC Constitution.
- (d) These four principles are¹:
1. Overview and Scrutiny should focus on supporting the improvement of health services to Kent residents.

¹ p.94, <http://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=18603>

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2. Overview and Scrutiny should minimise the additional administrative burdens on local authorities or NHS bodies.
3. Overview and Scrutiny agendas need to be developed jointly by the local authorities and the NHS bodies.
4. Overview and Scrutiny needs to operate at different levels within Kent.

4. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to discuss and note the report.