

Item 6: SECamb – Current Developments: Additional Information from Dover District Council

Minutes of the meeting of the SCRUTINY (COMMUNITY AND REGENERATION) Committee held on Monday 16 August 2010 at the Council Offices, Whitfield on at 6.30 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor G J Hood

Councillors: A Friend  
D R Lloyd-Jones  
J F Tranter  
R S Walkden

Also Present: Mr Geraint Davies (Director of Corporate Affairs and Service Development, South East Coast Ambulance Service)  
Mr Geoff Catling (Director of Technical Services and Logistics, South East Coast Ambulance Service)  
Mr Chris Stamp (Senior Operations Manager)

Officer: Democratic Support Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C M Edwards, L A Keen, P A Lodge, S C Manion, V J Revell and J C Record.

The Democratic Support Officer advised the Committee that an apology for absence had been received from the Portfolio Holder for Health and Public Protection, Councillor P G Heath.

162 APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

It was noted that in accordance with Rule 4 of the Council Procedure Rules, Councillor J F Tranter had been appointed as substitute for Councillor V J Revell.

163 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Democratic Support Officer reported that there had been no applications for public speaking at the meeting.

164 'MAKE READY' AMBULANCE SERVICE REORGANSIATION

The Committee received a presentation from representatives of South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECamb) on the 'Make Ready' changes being implemented at Ashford and how they would change the ambulance service in Dover.

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A letter from the Reverend Peter Shered was also circulated to the members of the Committee for their information.

It was stated that the objective of the 'Make Ready' initiative was to improve infection control; reduce risk to staff, vehicles and equipment; enable resources to be used more flexibly and effectively; and reinvest efficiencies generated in front line services such as staff and clinical developments.

The location of the 'Make Ready' depots close to East Kent's acute hospitals in Ashford and Thanet was deliberate, as the majority of ambulance responses would end at these hospitals and it would permit ambulance crews to quickly restock equipment or replace vehicles as necessary before returning to the network of Ambulance Community Response Posts (ACRP) in the local community. The new ACRP's would enable SECamb to replace its existing ageing physical infrastructure, the majority of which (68%) predated 1974 with a modern, flexible and more appropriately located infrastructure.

The 'Make Ready' depots would have dedicated facilities for ambulance maintenance and deep cleansing.

Currently, ambulance crews were required to clean their own vehicles, which was not as efficient as using specialist cleansing staff and reduced the amount of time that ambulances were available for use. The deep cleansing of an ambulance took 8 hours and would be performed at the 'Make Ready' depot unlike the current situation where vehicles had to be sent away to undergo a deep cleansing.

By providing sufficient vehicles to cope with demand of 141% of the expected level there would be sufficient spare vehicle capacity to cover the removal of vehicles from use for cleansing. A 'Make Ready' station would have 21 ambulances and nine response cars, of which at peak times 14 ambulances and six response cars would be operational. In the United States of America where the 'Make Ready' system had been operational for longer, they operated to a 133% capacity.

The Committee was reassured that whilst the 'Make Ready' depot was outside of the District, it would not impact on response times as ambulances would in most cases be responding from locations such as the ACRP stations to incidents.

The introduction of two ACRP's in the District – Dover South and Dover North (based at Whitfield) would also improve the response time for ambulances to rural areas around Dover. Each ACRP would accommodate one ambulance crew of two people and one response vehicle with a crew of one. It was emphasised to the committee that the replacement of the existing ambulance

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station with two ACRP's would not result in any reduction of capacity and would in actuality put more resources into the area.

The Committee was advised that if the current Dover Station site were to be developed as part of larger redevelopment of the area and SECamb's were to be offered a location on that larger site then it would want to retain that option if it offered and it made sense in terms of response times. However, the Trust was committed to developing ACRPs within Dover to meet the needs of local patients.

In response to a question from Councillor A Friend, the Committee was assured that the Dover North ACRP did not replace Deal Ambulance Station.

It was stated that regular vehicle maintenance undertaken on site by trained mechanics would reduce the number of vehicle hours lost due to breakdowns and the operational life of the vehicle would be extended.

The 'Make Ready' depots would also equip all ambulances to an agreed uniform design so that crews knew where vital medical equipment was in an emergency regardless of which vehicle they were operating from. The replacing of a link between a crew and a specific ambulance with a uniformly laid out and equipped set of vehicles meant that it would be possible for crews to switch vehicles mid-shift in the event that an ambulance needed to be taken out of service for cleansing and restocking following an emergency response.

The Committee was advised that the current ambulance fleet was on average three years and two months old and were all the same type of Mercedes vehicle.

RESOLVED:(a) That the Cabinet be asked to note that the South East Coast Ambulance Service 'Make Ready' initiative was supported by the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee by reason of the following perceived benefits:

- (i) The assurance from South East Coast Ambulance Service that there would be no diminution of service in Dover as a result of the 'Make Ready' initiative.
- (ii) The assurance from South East Coast Ambulance Service that the replacement of the existing Dover Ambulance Station with a Dover South Ambulance Community Response Post (ACRP) on the existing site and a new Dover

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North ACRP at Whitfield would not reduce the number of ambulances operating from Dover.

- (iii) The assurance from South East Coast Ambulance Service that the 'Make Ready' initiative would not adversely impact on response times for Category A (life threatening) and Category B (urgent) responses.
  - (iv) The improved infection control through the use of specialist cleansing staff.
  - (v) The introduction of a standardised specification for drugs and equipment that might be needed in a medical emergency on board the ambulance.
  - (vi) The improved response time to rural parts of the district through the introduction of the Dover North ACRP based at Whitfield.
- (b) That the Cabinet be urged to work with South East Coast Ambulance Service to raise awareness of the 'Make Ready' initiative and what it would mean for the people of Dover and the surrounding area.
  - (c) That the Cabinet be asked to note the intention of the Scrutiny (Community and Regeneration) Committee to visit a working 'Make Ready' station to observe the initiative in action and that an invitation would be extended to the Portfolio Holder for Health and Public Protection to accompany the Committee.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm.