

# Minutes

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7<sup>th</sup> September 2011



| Councillors             | Present   | Councillors | Present   |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| P R Barlow              | Yes       | W J Rose    | Yes       |
| C A Cadman              | Yes       | C Sandbrook | Apologies |
| Dr R L Evans (Chairman) | Yes       | G A Spray   | Yes       |
| S A Howell              | Apologies | J S Sutton  | Yes       |
| D J Louis               | Apologies | J R Swift   | Yes       |
| R P Ramage              | Apologies |             |           |

Councillor P Horner was also in attendance.

### 9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

**INFORMATION:** The following interests were declared:

- Councillor Barlow declared a personal interest in agenda item 5, Scrutiny of Transport Links and Accessibility to Health Services across the District, as a Non-Executive Director of the East of England Ambulance Services Trust, and an employee of the North Essex Partnership Foundation NHS Trust.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, all councillors remained in the meeting for all the items and took part in the debate and decision thereon.

### 10. QUESTION TIME

**INFORMATION:** There were no questions asked or statements made.

### 11. MINUTES

**DECISION:** That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 12. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2011-12, SCRUTINY OF TRANSPORT LINKS AND ACCESSIBILITY TO HEALTH SERVICES ACROSS THE DISTRICT

#### Scrutiny Hearing with NHS Mid Essex

**INFORMATION:** The Chairman welcomed the following invited speakers:

Carol Winser Interim Deputy Director Development, NHS Mid Essex  
Alison Manton Assistant Director, Commercial Directorate, NHS Mid Essex  
Jenni Kirkland Health Improvement Manager, NHS Mid Essex

Members had received background information documents on Access to Health Services and an Update on Service Provision in Witham from NHS Mid Essex. A report on Life Expectancy in Braintree District was also tabled.

Members received a presentation on Access to Health Services from Carol Winsor, Alison Manton and Jenni Kirkland. The representatives from NHS Mid Essex gave the following responses to questions raised by members:

- The representatives are aware of S106 funding for the provision of a new GP surgery in Witham South Ward. However, the funding is only available for the provision of a minimal service. Further work is required to evaluate existing capacity which NHS Mid Essex is undertaking before any decision could be taken on a possible new surgery. First findings of the evaluation include that there is capacity in Witham although further work is required around thresholds for access to services eg transport distances.
- Witham Ward Members believe the GP-Patient Ratio in their wards is significantly higher than that in other parts of the district at in excess 2,400 per GP in some cases. The NHS Mid Essex representatives advised that the information they had did not support this and they would be happy to provide Committee members with capacity information related Witham and the district as a whole.
- Information could also be provided to the Committee on practice referrals to hospitals which might shed some light on Witham patients being referred to hospitals when they need to be seen.
- The NHS Mid Essex representatives would like to look closer to the findings of the PKF report on Health Inequalities in Essex and the view that no hospital, or a lack of health facilities in Witham, was a contributory factor to a lower life expectancy in Witham. People in Witham are accessing health facilities although the facilities may not be in Witham.
- The provision of services for minor cuts and injuries are the same in Witham as other parts of Essex with GPs providing these services during opening hours.
- The Douglas Grove Surgery, Witham, has been open for around one year. Services at the surgery are expanding.
- A review of services in some parts of Mid Essex has been carried out which might provide some useful information in respect of services in Witham.
- The provision of some services locally is now being driven by GP practices though commissioning groups. This is enabling specialists to provide certain services locally. Members might find it useful to hear from some of the GPs in a commissioning group on their thoughts for the future provision of services locally.
- As regards bringing more services closer to people, the NHS Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention (QIPP) agenda aims to achieve value for money and the best possible quality in order that patients get the greatest benefit. As part of that agenda, NHS Mid Essex is looking to move services closer to people where

possible. NHS Mid Essex also used mobile screening services where they could to help move services closer to people. People are also able to use the mobile screening services of neighbouring NHS PCTs. For example, people living in the north of the district can use services in Haverhill.

- Individual GP practices will not be commissioning expertise in the treatment of patients with complex mental health needs. The service would be provided through some specialist GPs.
- A new rehabilitation unit is due to open at Halstead Hospital. A GP commissioning group is looking at how the Halstead site might be better used in the future.

It was agreed that NHS Mid Essex would provide the Committee with information on patient capacity, patient referrals, and patient satisfaction in the Braintree district.

It was also agreed that GPs in a commissioning group be invited to a meeting of the Committee in order that members might hear the views of those GPs on the future provision of services locally.

The Chairman thanked Carol Winsor, Alison Manton, Jenni Kirkland and Clare Lawrence on behalf of the Committee for attending the meeting and the information given to Committee. The Chairman very much appreciated the value of the Mid Essex representatives attending and thought the Committee would likely wish to receive further information for the NHS Mid Essex representatives in due course. He also looked forward to receiving the information mentioned earlier in the meeting.

### **Scoping Report for the Scrutiny Review**

**DECISION:** That the arrangements for the scrutiny of transport links and accessibility to health services across the district as set out in the report be approved.

**REASON FOR THE DECISION:** To agree the scope of the scrutiny study.

## 12. **REVIEW OF MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) 2011/12 TO 2014/15 UPDATE.**

**INFORMATION:** Members received a presentation on the MTFS from Councillor Siddall, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Efficiency and Resources.

Councillor Chris Siddall and the Head of Finance gave the following responses to questions raised by members:

- The process carried out in 2010/11 of identifying the savings in the MTFS going forward was described. This included a desire to maintain front line services, a Star Chamber, and a review of the level of funding for statutory, mandatory and discretionary services. The process of now achieving the savings is kept under review by Cabinet Members and senior managers.
- There is a desire to extend the freeze in council tax beyond 2012/13 but an assumption of a 2.5% increase for 2013/14 and 2014/15 has been made.
- The Council is looking work smarter. For example, bringing in short term expertise when needed as in the case of staff for the town centre regeneration.

- Income from interest was lower than had been assumed. Treasury Advisors were now advising the Council that interest rates would likely be lower and for longer period than the Council had assumed. On the other hand, there had been a significant income from dry recyclables that had not been assumed.
- The Council is considering the implications of the Agency Workers Directive and its options in terms of its approach to complying with the requirements of the Directive.
- There is greater unpredictability in budget for 2013/14. The government is consulting on a business rate retention scheme which might impact on the budget from 2013/14. The proposed scheme could have benefits to the Council (ie. the Council could retain part of any future increases in business rates) but also contained risks (eg. The Council might receive less funding if businesses in the district were to close). Councillor Siddall is planning to respond to the consultation for the Council.
- There are also government proposals in terms of changes to council tax benefits which might also impact on the budget in 2013/14.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Siddall and the Head of Finance on behalf of the Committee for attending the meeting and the information given to Committee. The Chairman very much appreciated the value of both attending.

## 12. **DECISION PLANNER**

**DECISION:** That the Decision Planner for the period 17<sup>th</sup> August 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011 be received and noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.58pm.

Dr R L Evans  
Chairman