
OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1. Since the last meeting of the Council, the following are the main areas of work the Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee has undertaken:

- (a) **County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals NHS Trust** – Over the past few weeks a number of issues across the Acute Trust have dominated the Committee's agenda, including the transfer of stroke admissions to Bishop Auckland General Hospital and the relocation of inpatient haematology services also to Bishop Auckland.

Of particular concern to Members is the closure of ward 52, a 26 bed elderly care ward of Darlington Memorial Hospital. A number of special meetings have been held with John Saxby, the Trust's Chief Executive, to discuss the potential impact of adult social care services, the rationale behind the closure and future plans for the hospital.

Following the recommendation of the Committee the closure of the ward was postponed to allow Members to receive more information on the hospital's bed capacity across its medical wards and how existing staff would be dispersed across the hospital.

A further meeting was held at which Members acknowledged that the spare bed capacity did justify the closure of a ward, although, we have asked the Trust's Director of Nursing to re-examine her recommendation to close ward 52 and report back to the Committee accordingly.

We have also made recommendations to ensure that dialogue with both the Authority and the Scrutiny Committee over such important issues is improved in future and Council colleagues and I will now meet with John Saxby and Nonnie Crawford on a monthly basis to share information.

- (b) **Reconfiguration of Darlington Primary Care Trust** – Colin Morris attending our meeting to update Members on the latest position in Darlington following the reconfiguration of PCTs across the Country. Although we have retained our own separate PCT, to achieve more efficient commissioning and the required 15 per cent savings in management cost, a number of joint posts will be necessary and County Durham PCT will have overall responsibility for commissioning and strategic planning on behalf of Darlington PCT. Members have been assured that practice based commissioning will ensure that Darlington's interests are protected and we will continue to monitor this situation as the new arrangements take effect.
- (c) **Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan** – Councillors Copeland, Mrs. Scott and myself have agreed to work with the Policy Advisors in the Chief Executive's Office to look at the issues of service planning, work programming and performance

indicators in preparation for the Council's next CPA assessment in June 2007.

- (d) **Annual Health Check – Areas for Review** – In preparation for the annual health check process, which looks at the performance of NHS Trusts across the Healthcare Commission's 24 core standards, Members of the Committee have split into four separate groups and agreed some common standards in relation to patient focus, accessible and responsive care and public health to inform our contribution to each Trusts final declaration of compliance for 2006/07. Preparatory work will now take place through the Task and Finish Groups in preparation for the April 2007 deadline.
- (e) **Mental Health and Well-Being Review Group – Scoping** – As part of the assistance available to the Committee through the Centre for Public Scrutiny's Health Scrutiny Support Programme, Members took advantage of a scoping session, which was independently facilitated by Feisal Jassat from the Centre's Expert Advisory Team. As a result of the session we have agreed our terms of reference for this review and formulated a draft project plan which will involve the whole Committee splitting into two groups to look at the identification of mental health problems and the provision of mental health services in Darlington respectively.
- (f) **Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee** – Councillor Copeland again represented the Committee at the last meeting where further discussion on a Tees Valley wide scrutiny review was held and a number of training opportunities identified.

Councillor Mrs. Marian Swift
Chair of the Social Affairs and Health Scrutiny Committee