

MINUTES of the meeting of Health Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Wednesday, 8th October, 2003 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor W.J.S. Thomas (Chairman)
Councillor T.M. James (Vice Chairman)

Councillors: Mrs. W.U. Attfield, G.W. Davis, Brig. P. Jones CBE,
G. Lucas, R. Mills, Ms. G.A. Powell and J.B. Williams

In attendance: Councillor P.E. Harling

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs J.A. Hyde.

2. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. BRIEFING ON THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY HEALTH COUNCIL

The Committee received a presentation by the Chairman of the Community Health Council (CHC), Mr Alan Lloyd on the role of the CHC and his view on issues the Committee needed to consider in undertaking its role.

He said that the Committee had an onerous task. It was, however, advantageous that the authority was a unitary authority and that its boundaries were coterminous with the Primary Care Trust and the Hospital Trust. He said that it would be important to establish how the new structures such as the Patients Forums would operate and for the Committee to understand how all the elements related to each other and establish the necessary appropriate links. He remarked on the importance of establishing a good working relationship with health partners. The Committee would also need to take care to ensure that it acquired the relevant knowledge to enable it to discharge its responsibilities effectively.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lloyd for addressing the Committee.

5. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the formulation of a work programme for itself.

The report noted that following the initial induction programme of visits and informal meetings with Health bodies a work programme had emerged structured around three main areas: Managing public expectations and public involvement, improving public health, and access and waiting. The report suggested activities the Committee could undertake within each area. The Committee would also respond to major consultations as required.

It was acknowledged that the resourcing of the work programme would need to be considered. It was proposed that reviews be costed and resources assigned when the detailed scoping of individual reviews was undertaken.

Within this framework the Chairman proposed that sub-groups be established to look at delayed discharges, car parking at the County Hospital, communication and morale and the proposals relating to the ear, nose and throat Service. He also suggested that consideration also be given to establishing special relationships with key health partners. He also proposed that, in principle, Worcestershire County Council should be invited to enter into an informal agreement under which it would lead on scrutiny of the Ambulance Trust

In the course of discussion the following other principal points were made:

- That the Committee would regard the proposals affecting the ear, nose and throat service to be a substantial variation upon which it therefore had a statutory right to be consulted.
- It was noted that from time to time it would be beneficial to the Committee in carrying out its work to be able to draw on independent experts with professional knowledge of the health service.
- It was understood that recruitment to the Patients Forums was proving difficult and suggested that information be circulated to Members to enable them to publicise the Forums and encourage people to apply.
- The Chairman stated his intention to work with Worcestershire County Council to sponsor a regional conference for all the Health Scrutiny Committees within the Strategic Health Authority's area, to which surrounding authorities would also be invited.

RESOLVED:

That (a) a draft work programme be prepared in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman taking account of views expressed by the Committee and reported to the Committee's next meeting for final approval;

(b) in the meantime Sub-Groups be proposed as follows:

- **Delayed discharges: focusing particularly on transfer from community hospital to home: a group comprising those Members who serve on both the Health Scrutiny Committee and the Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee (Councillors Mrs JA Hyde, R Mills, Ms GA Powell) and Councillors GW Davis and G Lucas, chaired by Councillor Mrs PA Andrews;**
- **Car parking at the County Hospital: a group comprising Mrs WU Attfield, TM James, Brig P Jones and JB Williams;**
- **Communication and Morale (Councillors Brig P Jones and WJS Thomas.)**
- **Proposals affecting the ear nose and throat Service (Councillors TM James, Brig P Jones, G Lucas, WJS Thomas and JB Williams)**

(c) consideration be given at the next meeting to establishing special relationships with key health partners principally involved in the areas of consultation and choice and arrangements for monitoring issue arising from the Climbie case; and

(d) in principle, in agreement with Worcestershire CC scrutiny of the Ambulance Trust be led by that Council, subject to any areas of specific relevance to Herefordshire being considered as appropriate by this Committee, with Councillor Mills to maintain a watching brief.

6. MAKING PARTNERSHIP WORK FOR PATIENTS, CARERS AND SERVICE USERS - CONSULTATION

The Committee considered a consultation document issued by the Department of Health: Making Partnership Work for Patients Carers and Service Users – a proposed strategic partnership agreement between the Department of Health, the NHS and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing commented that the Council was working with health partners and the Herefordshire Community Care Alliance to produce a local compact early in 2004.

It was noted that the key test was whether the compact contributed to improvement and that was something the Committee might wish to scrutinise.

RESOLVED: That a draft response be prepared in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for circulation to all Members of the Committee for comment following which a response be submitted by the Chairman on the Committee's behalf.

7. CHOICE/RESPONSIVENESS AND EQUITY

The Committee discussed issues relating to choice responsiveness and equity in the health service. This was in the context of a national consultation exercise the main aims of which were to improve patient and user experience and build new partnerships between those who use health and social care services and those who work in them.

The Committee viewed a NHS video entitled Choice responsiveness, and equity.

Mr S Hairsnape the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust's Director of Development, explained that the Health Service was experiencing significant growth in the resources allocated to it and improvements were being made. However, the view was that people were not appreciative, in part because of lack of choice. The political philosophy was that allowing patients choice would lead to further improvements and help to change their perception of the service they received. The challenge would be to consider how to find ways of making informed choices available across the Board, even in areas, such as mental health services, where it might initially seem difficult.

In the course of discussion the following principal points were made:

- Members supported in principle the proposals to introduce choice. However, a note of caution was sounded that the Committee had observed in the context of

delayed discharges that the right to choose could have unwelcome knock on effects.

- The Committee should take a keen interest in this agenda and make it part of its role to challenge health partners to ensure that choice was being offered. When considering service changes the Committee should consider whether they helped and promoted choice and the extent to which patients had been involved in considering those changes.

RESOLVED: That a draft response be prepared in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for circulation to all Members of the Committee for comment following which a response be submitted by the Chairman on the Committee's behalf.

8. TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing reported that she had discussed with Mr E McPherson of the Patient Advice and Liaison service the possibility of him developing a training programme for Members based on the training he provided to lay members of relevant bodies.

The Committee welcomed the suggestion and noted that detailed proposals would be brought forward.

The Chairman commented that he had requested information on training provided to other Authorities.

The meeting ended at 12.35 p.m.

CHAIRMAN