

MINUTES of the meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee held at Brockington, 35 Hafod Road, Hereford on Thursday, 29th April, 2004 at 5.00 p.m.

Present: Councillor W.J.S. Thomas (Chairman)

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

In attendance: Councillor W.L.S. Bowen

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

31. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)

There were no named substitutes.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

33. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th April, 2004 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. EAR, NOSE AND THROAT SERVICE CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the response to the Ear, Nose and Throat Service consultation exercise.

The covering report outlined the process which the Sub-Group appointed by the Committee had followed in preparing the draft response, a copy of which was appended to the report.

It was noted that the Sub-Group would have liked to gather additional evidence but the time constraints had prevented it from doing so. It was therefore proposed that if further relevant information was brought to the Committee's attention the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing should be authorised, following consultation with the Chairman to submit further observations on the Committee's behalf before the closing date for the consultation exercise.

The Chairman, Chief Executive and Medical Director of the Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust had chosen to attend the meeting. At the Chairman's invitation they agreed to take part in the meeting and answer questions.

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

- In reply to a question about the number of emergency patients who would have

to travel to Worcester the Medical Director advised that, at the request of managers of the Herefordshire Hospitals NHS Trust, an audit had been undertaken by one of the Herefordshire Consultants and one of the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust Consultants. This had produced the figures set out in the consultation document. Patient safety and quality of care was paramount. The effectiveness of any new arrangements would be monitored.

- It was agreed that the draft response should be amended to reflect the need for the number of patients travelling to Worcester to be monitored and the position reviewed as appropriate.
- It was noted that since the publication of the draft response the Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Service NHS Trust had written supporting the Network Option as set out in the consultation document. A copy of the letter was circulated. It was agreed that the response should be updated accordingly.
- A number of Members commented on the initial reservations that they had had about the prospect of some elements of the services being transferred to Worcester and how these had been overcome by the evidence in favour of the Network Option.
- It was emphasised that the provision of Ear, Nose and Throat Services remained Hereford based with only a very small element of service being transferred to Worcester.
- In response to concern about the potential difficulties those wishing to visit patients might face the Medical Director confirmed that if patients needed continuing hospital care and could safely be returned to Hereford it would be sensible for that to happen.
- That in authorising the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing to submit further observations on the Committee's behalf it should be clearly understood that any such observations should be consistent with the views expressed by the Committee and reflected in the proposed response.
- There was a consensus on the part of Members, officers and the representatives of the Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust that the process followed in preparing the response to the consultation had worked well.
- The Chief Executive of the Hereford Hospitals NHS Trust commented that in almost every specialism some patients were treated outside Hereford. He was looking at ways of providing more services in Hereford and would like to discuss a proposed Strategy for the Hospital with the Committee at an early stage. He noted that the Committee could play an important part in maintaining public confidence in the ear, nose and throat service. He also cautioned that the implementation of any changes would need to be dealt with carefully.

RESOLVED

That (a) the response to the consultation on the provision of Ear, Nose and Throat services as set out in the appendix to the report be endorsed as amended;

and

- (b) the Director of Social Care and Strategic Housing be authorised, following consultation with the Chairman, to submit further observations on the Committee's behalf in the light of any new information received before the closing date for the consultation exercise.**

The meeting ended at 5.33 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

