

CONSULTATIONS ON NEW STRATEGIC HEALTH AUTHORITY, PRIMARY CARE TRUST AND AMBULANCE SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS

PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

CABINET

16TH MARCH, 2006

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To consider the Council's response to three consultations regarding the future configuration of NHS services in the West Midlands.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

That the comments set out in this report be used as a basis for the Council's response to the three consultations to be agreed jointly with the Health Scrutiny Committee.

Reasons

The Secretary of State for Health has approved consultation on proposals to reconfigure NHS services following the publication of the "Commissioning a Patient Led NHS" the national NHS document which asked all Strategic Health Authorities to undertake an assessment of all NHS organisations focusing on a change in the way services are commissioned and delivered to reflect patient choices.

Strategic Health Authorities, including the proposed West Midlands Strategic Health Authority, will have to develop new approaches to managing their health care as a result of an increased range of health care providers and an increase in patient choice. The way Ambulance Trusts and PCTs are structured and managed will also have to change to enable them to continue to deliver responsive and efficient services.

National consultation exercises regarding new boundaries for Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and Ambulance Trusts are taking place between 14th December, 2005 and 22nd March 2006. The consultations relate to changes to organisational boundaries and do not include any proposals for service change. In terms of SHAs in the West Midlands, the proposal being consulted on is to bring together Birmingham and the Black Country SHA, Shropshire and Staffordshire SHA and West Midlands South SHA, to establish one SHA for the West Midlands that is coterminous with the Government

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Geoff Hughes, Director of Adult and Community Services on 01432 260695 or Sue Fiennes, Director
of Children's Services on 01432 260048

Office for the Region.

For PCTs in the South West Midlands, the proposal is to bring together the current PCTs of Wyre Forest, Redditch and Bromsgrove and South Worcestershire to form one Worcestershire PCT. Additionally North Warwickshire PCT, Rugby PCT and South Warwickshire PCT would be merged to create a Warwickshire PCT with Herefordshire PCT and Coventry PCT remaining as currently configured.

The proposal being consulted on for ambulance services in the West Midlands is to bring together the current four Ambulance Trusts (Staffordshire; Coventry and Warwickshire; West Midlands and Shropshire; Hereford and Worcester) to be replaced by one Ambulance Trust covering the whole of the West Midlands conterminous with the Government Office for the Region.

The results of the consultation will be reported by the SHA to the Department of Health who will make a final decision on the re-configurations.

The proposals have been discussed at a series of public meetings across the County including Hereford City, Golden Valley, Ross-On-Wye, Ledbury and Leominster. In addition, the Health Authority and the Primary Care Trust have met with the Health Scrutiny Committee of Herefordshire Council and the Primary Care Trust PPI forum. The West Midlands South Strategic Health Authority has also had discussions with local MPs and other stakeholders.

Copies of the consultation documents on all three consultations are available in the Members' Room for information or on request.

Considerations

1. Members are invited to consider their response on the proposed reconfigurations. The main issues arising from the public consultation process in respect of delivery of NHS services in Herefordshire are set out below.

Regional Health Authority Consultation

2. A proposal to establish one new West Midlands SHA to replace the existing three SHAs of Birmingham and the Black Country, Shropshire and Staffordshire and West Midlands South has the following benefits:
 - The West Midlands is a geographic area widely recognised by the resident population;
 - There would no longer be the need for the same number of SHAs, this will reduce management and administrative costs by approximately £7.5 million to be reinvested in front line services;
 - Shared boundaries for the Government Office for the Region, Regional Development Agency and Assembly should offer significant advantages in influencing and decision making to enhance health improvement and reduce inequalities.
3. However, the distances of services or support away from the locality raises questions about the ability to maintain both staff familiarity with local issues and existing quality of provision, for example West Midlands South SHAs work on raising the public health agenda. Members may wish to see these points clearly addressed in the detailed

delivery arrangements for the new Regional Health Authority.

4. The overall view emerging from the public meetings in Herefordshire is that the proposed reorganisation is beneficial. Local people would generally see the benefits of a Strategic Health Authority covering the identifiable West Midlands area with the advantage of shared boundaries with other Government Agencies. In addition local people have largely welcomed the reduction in management savings at Health Authority level with the assurance that these are going to be ploughed back into front-line services.

Ambulance Trust Consultation

5. The Department of Health is currently consulting on a proposal to create 11 new Ambulance Trusts in England. The Department of Health notes that these proposed changes are purely administrative and do not involve changes to service provision. However, notwithstanding this point, the Department welcomes feedback from a wide range of individual groups or organisations which includes local authorities.
6. The proposed impact within the West Midlands would be that the four current NHS Trusts covering West Midlands, Hereford and Worcester, Coventry and Warwickshire and Staffordshire would merge together into a new Ambulance Trust covering the West Central Midlands area. All four Ambulance Service Trusts are working together to ensure plans are in place to maintain current standards and ways of working and that all services move to a standard of the best. The proposals do not include any proposals to change the models of service provision locally or local control centres. Indeed local delivery units would be created to ensure local focus maintained.
7. The consultation suggests that the merged Ambulance Trust would have the capacity to drive up standards and achieve better, more consistent, performance and clinical outcomes. Patients across the Region should benefit from the best practice standards from each of the current services. There should be improved coordination on emergency planning across the West Midlands, there should be a flexibility to invest time improving training of staff and it is indicated that the money saved, approximately £3million in management costs, can be reinvested into front line ambulance services. However, the benefits of a single Ambulance Trust will only be fully realised if a large degree of the locally focused drive management and pride is maintained and locked into new organisations via local delivery units.
8. The major concerns reflected by local people in the consultation events held to date by the PCT has been the concern to ensure that the re-organised Ambulance Trust can respond quickly and effectively to local needs. Different communities have different requirements and it is important that the new Trust delivers a service tailored to the rural nature of Herefordshire. In addition the local service has developed excellent partnership working with other local NHS organisations and out of hours providers, this is particularly important in the management of unscheduled care and out of hours care.
9. The new Trust should maintain these key relationships to ensure the delivery of a high quality service that meets the different needs of the local communities served, particularly the rural population of Herefordshire. A key point is to ensure that any new control room facilities build in an understanding of the various localities within the region. Staff familiarity with local issues is often key to fast responses to emergency situations. On the basis that these considerations are taken into account, the proposed boundary changes should provide more consistent, convenient, high quality and appropriate ambulance services for the population of Herefordshire and it is proposed that the Council's response to the consultation should be developed on this basis.

Primary Care Trust Consultation

10. The proposal here is to establish new PCTs across the County including West Midlands South. The proposals out for consultation specifically includes the maintenance of an independent Herefordshire PCT as currently configured. The new approach will require PCTs to enhance and strengthen their role in commissioning services, that is, the process by which the NHS plans and pays for health services. PCTs will focus increasingly on public health and on supporting GPs to be more involved in commissioning via practice based commissioning.
11. The Council has previously indicated its support for an independent Herefordshire PCT in its pre-consultation response to the Strategic Health Authority. Herefordshire can already demonstrate the benefits that co-terminosity between the Primary Care Trust and local authority has produced to date. The recent White Paper (Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for Community Services) reinforces further, the requirement for close partnership working and on a wider well-being agenda including for example leisure, transport and housing.
12. There has already been positive progress with the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust in developing proposals for integrating commissioning, planning, public health and related functions of the Council and PCT into a new Public Service Trust as set out in the report to Cabinet on 23rd February, 2006. The proposals for a Herefordshire Public Service Trust would create an organisation to deliver two of the key themes of Herefordshire's Local Area Agreement (Children and Young People and Healthier Communities for Older People). Any option which undermines the PCTs current co-terminosity with the Council would threaten to undermine joint working and make current Section 31 arrangements and Children's Trusts arrangements more difficult.
13. Key points made in the pre-consultation stage also related to the fact that Herefordshire is a large rural County with its own identity which is in a peripheral location on the edge of the West Midlands. There is therefore a strong public view in favour of maintaining a local organisation responsible for health which will be sensitive to local needs. There is also concern that any larger geographical PCT which created a locality structure recognising Herefordshire is likely to be expensive and therefore would either undermine management cost reductions or prove impossible to achieve meaningfully within management costs.
14. There is also an opportunity in developing a Public Service Trust for Herefordshire to explore alternative models for mental health commissioning. The Council has already indicated that it would wish to encourage the Regional Health Authority to consider widening Public Service Trust considerations to include mental health commissioning, to provide a vehicle for an integrated mental health service to be sustained in Herefordshire.

Risk Management

The comments on the consultations are aimed at minimising any negative impact of the proposed reconfigurations on the residents of Herefordshire.

Alternative Options

There are no Alternative Options.

Consultees

There have been a number of public consultation meetings.

As set out in report

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None identified.