

Health Scrutiny Panel – Meeting held on Thursday, 6th December, 2007.

Present:- Councillors Plimmer (Chair), Dhillon (until 9.45 p.m.), Dodds, Khan (until 8.05 p.m.), Maclsaac, O'Connor, Shine (until 8.25 p.m. and Small.

Also present :- Councillors Dr Sadhana Bose, Lise Llewellyn, Paul Rowley, Viki Wadd (Berkshire East PCT), Dr Jonathan Jones and Suzie Loader (Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust).

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Qureshi.

PART I

29. Declarations of Interest

None.

30. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting of the Panel held on 29th October, 2007 were approved as a true record.

31. Minutes of the Joint Meeting with the Green and Built Environment Scrutiny Panel

The minutes of the joint meeting with the Green and Built Environment Scrutiny Panel held on 13th November, 2007 were approved as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Maclsaac in the list of apologies for absence.

32. Minutes of the Joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The minutes of the joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20th September, 2007 were noted.

33. Right Care, Right Place Update

With the permission of the Chair, Paul Rowley updated the Panel on the current position in respect of the Right Care, Right Place consultation process. He advised that the next consultation was about service change in localities and the Berkshire East PCT and the Berkshire Health Care Foundation Trust would be consulting with the Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Foundation Trust following on when outcomes were clearer. The consultation was due to start on 21st January, 2008 and would last for 12 weeks.

Health Scrutiny Panel - 06.12.07

He further reported that a "Gateway" exercise had recently taken place the outcome of which was the programme was tight and that there was still some uncertainties. However, the Gateway had encouraged the process to proceed but had stated that a contingency should be developed in partnership with key stakeholders in case a short delay may be needed.

It was now proposed to undertake an independent Review Panel, probably on 18th December, 2007 and invitations would be issued shortly. The detailed process for the consultation process would be agreed at the joint East Berkshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee taking place in January. He further reported that it was proposed to appoint an independent assessor to oversee the consultation feedback.

In response to a question, Mr Rowley confirmed that the PCT was encouraged by the feedback it was getting from the Borough Council and felt quite well supported in the process.

34. Serious Incident at Wexham Park Hospital

With the permission of the Chair, Paul Rowley, on behalf of the Berkshire Health Care NHS Foundation Trust, reported on a recent serious incident involving a patient in the Mental Health Unit at Wexham Park Hospital.

35. South East England Health Strategy

Dr Sadhana Bose (Berkshire East PCT) and Mike Boyle (Interim Director, Community and Cultural Services) made a joint presentation to the Committee on the South East England Health Strategy, outlining the key issues for Slough and the particular health issues for the Borough. On completion of the presentation, the following issues were raised by Members:-

- A Member asked why many of the figures in the presentation related to the period 2002 to 2004 and whether it was not possible to provide more up to date information about the current situation of health in the town. Dr Bose commented that she was presenting the latest data available. However, she would endeavour to obtain more up to date GP data for Members concerning issues such as the level of diabetes in the town. With regard to the issue of certain ethnic groups being more predisposed to contract diabetes, Dr Bose commented that it was the case that certain ethnic groups did have a predisposition. However, this did not explain the very high levels of diabetes in the town which were due to a number of other factors as well as genetic makeup.
- One Member of the Panel expressed concern that, in his view, the situation with the health of the town appeared to be getting steadily worse and he asked what measures the PCT and other agencies were taking to tackle these issues, many of which had been known about for some considerable time. Dr Bose responded that significant progress was being made in a number of key areas including coronary heart disease and

Health Scrutiny Panel - 06.12.07

cancers where there had been a significant fall in the numbers in Slough over the last five years. In addition, life expectancy was now improving in Slough and there was a substantial improvement as compared to say, 20 years ago. A great deal of work was taking place with many health promotion activities. There were detailed action plans against each of the targets and it was certainly not the case that the health of Slough residents was worsening. However, it was true to say that, as compared to other local authority areas in the region, Slough still had some way to go.

- Dr Bose also commented in respect of diabetes that it had been quite difficult to pick this condition up some years ago but that health professionals were now actively looking for it. Accordingly, far more cases were now being identified. However, it was also true to say that certain lifestyles did predispose people to certain diseases, including diabetes.
- A Member asked whether the PCT was targeting resources to the most deprived parts of the town. Dr Bose responded that the whole purpose of the PCT's work was to identify inequalities between wards and localities so that the most deprived and needy areas could be targeted. She referred to a number of initiatives specifically targeted at Slough Wards.
- A Member commented that whilst the Plan contained a number of worthwhile aspirations, there were not enough specific measures detailed so that individual Councillors could see exactly what initiatives and practical measures on the ground were being undertaken to address the identified issues. Local Councillors needed to be able to measure the improvement that was taking place and it was difficult to do so at the present time. She also referred to the growing problem of obesity in the young in Slough which was becoming a real problem and sought further information about the PCT and other agencies were doing to address this. Dr Bose suggested that it may be appropriate for the Panel to be presented with a detailed briefing on the Berkshire East Obesity Strategy at a future meeting so that it was clear what work was being undertaken. In addition, Mike Boyle suggested that it would be useful for the Panel to be provided with information on the specific initiatives being undertaken by the Council with partners to tackle issues such as obesity amongst children, etc.
- One Member expressed the view that the Council should be actively looking at ways of encouraging exercise amongst the young in the town and she felt that many families were discouraged from using the sports facilities by the entry fees. She suggested that the Council should be actively tackling this issue and, for example, giving free entry to children at the swimming pools and other sports facilities. Officers responded that the Council had a role as a community leader and champion to promote healthy lifestyles in the town, any scheme to provide free entry to sports facilities would incur a cost as the Authority would continue to be charged per entry. The issue would need to be addressed as part of the Council's budget process and the cost balanced against the Council's other spending priorities.

Health Scrutiny Panel - 06.12.07

- Reference was made to a number of recent successes in Slough, not least the successful work in reducing the level of teenage pregnancies. In addition, much good work was taking place in schools to encourage healthy eating and Slough GPs were offering a range of clinics and other services to their patients. However, changing people's behaviour did take time.
- Mike Boyle undertook to produce a report for the next meeting setting out all of the Slough-based initiatives being undertaken both by the Borough Council and its various partners in promoting a healthier lifestyle including, where appropriate, the cost to parents and users.
- Reference was made to the fact that the Local Area Agreement was the method by which the Council and partners could obtain additional resources from the Government for initiatives in the town. Because of the work undertaken to date, additional reward moneys were being provided because of the excellent work already undertaken both in respect of obesity and smoking. A Member commented that many of the targets within the LAA were dictated by Government. However, Ms Wadd commented that whilst there were a number of Government targets, the Local Authority and its targets were being increasingly advised to build up their own targets which were specific to and appropriate for the town and this was welcomed.

A Member referred to the issue of the numbers of long term sick in the town and asked whether there was a strategy for tackling this. Dr Bose commented that the PCT was looking at specific initiatives in Slough to bring these people back into work as well as encouraging healthier work places.

On completion of the questioning, the Chair thanked Dr Bose and Mike Boyle for their presentation and for answering the Panel's questions.

Resolved -

- (a) That the presentation be noted and welcomed.
- (b) That a report be presented to the Panel on the cost and other implications of providing free swimming or other sporting activities for disadvantaged children in the town.
- (c) That the issue of the Berkshire East Obesity Strategy be brought to an early meeting of the Panel and that additional information be provided on the specific initiatives being undertaken by the Council with partners to tackle issues such as obesity among children and young people etc.

Health Scrutiny Panel - 06.12.07

36. Update on Hospital Acquired Infections

Dr Jonathan Jones and Suzie Loader from the Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals Trust made a presentation to the Panel outlining the Trust's progress in tackling the issue of hospital acquired infections including MSSA, MRSA and C. Difficile. They highlighted the fact that the Trust was ahead of the national trend in respect of prevention with screening of new patients and decolonising where appropriate. There had consequently been a progressive drop in the number of these diseases in the two hospitals from a level of 78 cases in 2000 to a target of 16 cases this year which was expected to be achieved. Suzie Loader outlined the work being done to ensure the hospitals cleaning regimes were thorough and the strategies adopted when a case was suspected or identified. Dr Jones and Ms Loader answered a number of Member questions on the issue. Members commented that their observation bore out the claim that cleanliness was now much improved at Wexham Park Hospital. They commented however that they were not complacent and there was still some way to go, including in respect of hand washing by staff.

The issue the cleansing regimes in respect of ambulances was raised. Dr Jones commented that one of the main risks leading to infection was individuals coming from other healthcare facilities and this was regarded as high risk until it was known otherwise. As the ambulances were within the control of the south central ambulance trust, it would be necessary to seek their comments on this issue. It was agreed that Officers write to the Trust seeking clarification of their policy in this area.

Suzie Loader also made a presentation to the meeting on infection prevention and control as regards nursing numbers and the action that had been taken by the Trust to increase nursing cover in Wards as a way of ensuring prevention and control of infection. The Trust had put an additional £2m into the recruitment of additional nurses and this had made a big difference. In addition, less agency staff were now being used except where essential in specialist areas.

Members welcomed the report and the improved position at the hospitals and thanked Dr Jones and Ms Loader for their presentation and for the improved situation.

Resolved - That the position be noted and welcomed.

37. Mixed Wards at Wexham Park Hospital

Suzie Loader made a presentation to the Panel on the issue of single sex accommodation at Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals. She outlined the Government's policy on this and the Trust's standards. The formal assessment of the position had given an "excellent" outcome for Heatherwood and a "good" assessment for Wexham Park. The annual Trust audit in June of this year had given a 98% compliance figure for sleeping arrangements and a 90% compliance for toilet/washing facilities.

Health Scrutiny Panel - 06.12.07

Members noted that it was not always possible to have entirely single sex accommodation, particularly in specialist areas such as intensive care. However, Members were concerned that mixed accommodation was still utilised in areas such as day surgery and many women in particular had a major problem with this. Whilst it was accepted that there would be situations where it was impossible to separate male and female patients, the general view of Members was that, particularly in a town such as Slough with its multi-cultural diversity, it was not acceptable for mixed accommodation in the hospitals. Ms Loader concluded that the Trust always attempted to be as sensitive as possible to these issues and that segregation always took place where possible. However, it would not be achievable in 100% of situations.

Resolved - That the position be noted.

38. Update on Plans for Influenza Pandemic

The Emergency Planning Officer updated the Panel on the work being undertaken with emergency responders and health service providers to plan for an influenza pandemic. Her report provided the Panel with an update on the potential impact of such a pandemic and the plans being developed to respond to this type of emergency. The Government had recently issued new guidance for emergency planners and the Berkshire Authorities and partners could now take the matter forward. Planning in Berkshire was already well advanced with its plans being used in other parts of the country as a template. However, detailed planning work could start under the auspices of the new Government guidance.

The Officer answered a number of questions from Members and it was

Resolved - That the current position be noted.

39. Adult Social Care Services - Outcome of Department of Health Record of Performance Assessment

Mike Boyle reported the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment of adult social care services which showed that the Council was delivering good outcomes and had excellent capacity for improvement. The overall rating was three stars with an excellent capacity to improve. Members welcomed what was a very significant achievement and asked the Officer to pass on its congratulations to the team.

40. Forward Agenda Plan

The Panel noted its Agenda Plan for future meetings.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 p.m. and closed at 10.00 p.m.)