

Decision Digest

Edition 154

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 1st to 24th March 2015.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has received an update from Mr J Ellis, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Commissioning and Contract Lead, Dr E Tiffin, CCG Clinical Lead and Dr D Irwin, GP Mental Health Lead on Mental Health Services in Huntingdonshire. The general context was as follows:

- ◆ the Cambridgeshire service is split into different areas: North, Central and South with a central point of access via the Advice and Referral Centre (ARC).
- ◆ the majority of referrals come from GPs, with the police as the second highest source of referrals.
- ◆ priorities include a better referral system which involves getting patients referred in a short space of time.
- ◆ the CCG will also work on supporting patients once they have been discharged.

The Panel discussed the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service and noted there is no waiting time, for Step Three referrals the waiting time is variable and can be between four weeks and twelve weeks.

The Panel were informed that in nine months 128 patients have been sent to Peterborough and the average stay is around seven days. In addition it was noted that the total number of patients

that have been admitted has been lower than previously due to the increased use of home treatment.

The Panel were told that the voluntary sector provides a lot of support to mental health services and the sector will see an increase in funding from April 2016.

The panel concluded that they would like to invite an expert to discuss children's mental health services at a future meeting.

HINCHINGBROOKE HOSPITAL ACTION PLAN

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has received an update on the Hinchingsbrooke Hospital Action Plan from Mr H Abdel-Rahman, Chief Executive Officer and Clinical Chairman, Mr M Burrows, Chair of the Hinchingsbrooke Trust Board, Mrs D Fowler, Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Quality and Mr C Davidson, Franchise Manager. The presentation was split into two parts. The general context of part one was as follows:

- ◆ Hinchingsbrooke has recorded high levels of patient satisfaction as well as low levels of serious incidents including zero "Never Events".
- ◆ there have been particular problems with Accident and Emergency (A&E) as there have been nationwide.
- ◆ the Care Quality Commission (CQC) report highlighted that

the areas of critical care, maternity and gynaecology and outpatients and diagnostic imaging are good however the areas of A&E and Medical Care are inadequate.

- ◆ Hinchingsbrooke will have a new Critical Care unit opening in July.

The Panel were informed that the hospital is taking Governance seriously and has appointed a Director of Governance. The hospital will work with the NHS Trust Development Authority to improve the standards at the hospital. The hospital has applied for an additional £10m to balance the budget and will not start repaying the historical £40m debt until there is a budget surplus.

The Panel were informed that the cost of employing agency staff is double compared to employing a permanent member of staff. The current vacancy rate is 12% which is 21 full time equivalents however there are 16 international nurses in an induction programme.

The Panel were advised that the CQC's report was final and the 200 inaccuracies have been accepted however that did not change the rating received by the hospital.

The Panel were acquainted with the direction the hospital intends to take. The general context is as follows:

- ◆ Since the CQC's report there has been progress and the quality improvement plan can be viewed on the hospital's website.
- ◆ The Board is continuing to keep the finances in check as well as making sure that the hospital adheres to operational performance standards.
- ◆ The hospital aims to become one of the top 10 District General Hospitals.

The Panel discussed the heating system and were informed that the heating cannot be zoned as it is difficult to control. Therefore the decision is taken to keep the hospital warm as patients fare better in the warm than the cold.

PROCUREMENT OF A NEW SOFTWARE SYSTEM FOR THE HOME-LINK SCHEME

The Cabinet were informed that the current Housing Need Team's IT system is due for renewal and the Home-Link Partnership has begun a joint tendering exercise with the four district authorities in Cambridgeshire plus Cambridge City Council as well as two authorities in West Suffolk.

The current contract has previously been extended and the Partnership now wishes to test the market to explore other potential options. If following the procurement exercise a new supplier is the preferred bidder, additional costs are likely to be incurred. There will be no additional costs if the current supplier is the preferred bidder.

The software system is a web-based system and a licence fee is payable. The new contract will be for a 7 year period and there will not be a break in service between the expiry of the existing contract, which ends in April 2016 and commencement of the new contract.

The Cabinet authorised the Head of Customer Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, to accept the successful tender and sign the contract with the software provider.

If a new supplier is the successful bidder additional capital implementation costs in the region of £30k are likely to be incurred in which case options will be explored to fund this.

PATHFINDER HOUSE; BEST USE OF SPACE AND EXTERNAL LETTINGS

The Cabinet has authorised the Managing Director, after consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder for Resources, to approve the delegation in respect of long-term lettings of office space within Pathfinder House (Operational Estate). The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has supported the proposal and Members expressed the view that the proposal was a good news story.

EAST COAST MAIN LINE CROSSING CLOSURES

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has received a report on the East Coast Main Line crossing closures. The purpose of the scheme is to close all the level crossings from London Kings Cross to Edinburgh. The works will be split into two sections: London Kings Cross to Doncaster and Doncaster to Edinburgh. The works on the London Kings Cross to Doncaster section of the line will take three years from 2017 until 2020. At the meeting an updated plan for the crossing closure at Offord was circulated to Members.

The Panel were informed that the scheme will not coordinate with the A14 improvement scheme as they will be delivered utilising different Statutory Acts. It is clear that as a result of the scheme a number of roads, roundabouts and bridges will be built. Members were informed that all roads would be offered to the County Council for adoption however Network Rail will be responsible for bridge maintenance.

Subsequently the Cabinet were presented with a progress report on the proposed closure of all crossing points on the East Coast Main Line throughout Huntingdonshire.

There was agreement amongst the Cabinet that Network Rail had endeavoured to undertake public consultation in order to establish local needs and that the proposed improvements would benefit both passengers and motorists.

The concerns expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being), that the closure of level crossings could lead to increased road traffic, were highlighted and it was noted that these concerns were dispelled at the Panel meeting.

The Cabinet fully supported the investment in infrastructure. However, there remains an investment deficit in infrastructure in this part of the country, particularly to the rail network. It was also noted that widening of the line at Hatfield Viaduct was an essential improvement and the Cabinet urged East Coast Main Line to resolve this issue swiftly.

A14 PROGRESS REPORT

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) received an update on the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme. Members were advised that in the consultation process the Council is a Tier 1 Stakeholder and even though the authority is not required to make a formal representation in order to appear at the Public Examination, a formal representation has been made.

The Panel were informed that the new bridges built as part of the scheme will be future proofed until 2036. The provision of adequate signage was also a concern to the Panel however the details regarding signage are yet to be decided. Members were informed that funding has already been committed for the scheme by the Treasury and in addition Council's within the scheme

have agreed funding contributions of £100m towards the scheme.

The Cabinet received a progress report on the A14 project and were informed that the Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate had been accepted.

The deadline for submission of Council's Relevant Representation to the Planning Inspectorate was 12th March, prior to the meeting of Cabinet, and had been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) for comment.

As a result of the project regarding noise impact, 330 dwellings will be affected and 2800 dwellings will benefit. It was important that appropriate mitigation measures are put in place for those dwellings that will be most affected by noise.

It was noted that both Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have made a significant financial commitment to the scheme and disappointment was expressed that Cambridge City Council, who will benefit greatly from the scheme, have yet to make a financial commitment.

In considering the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) new bridges will be designed to accommodate future development and the provision of adequate signage is an ongoing matter.

The Cabinet agreed that the Council should continue to engage with the Development Consent Order process and to seek to reach agreement on outstanding matters.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DESIGN GUIDE – UPDATE

Members received a verbal update on the Huntingdonshire Design Guide from

the Planning Service Manager (Policy), Mr P Bland. The Panel were informed that the guide is designed to be an electronic document as this is seen as the way forward in communicating and reaching the community and stakeholders.

It was noted that the guide was designed by Mr M Huntington and had the following features: high quality pictures to demonstrate good and bad planning design, simple text so that the public can easily understand the document and it is interactive with links so that different areas of the document can be accessed. The document will go out for consultation in the near future.

The Panel were informed that the Design Guide will be a supplementary planning document and will be enforceable. When the design guide comes live then Development Management applications will refer to the guide.

ONE LEISURE UPDATE

The Cabinet received an update on the performance of One Leisure which provided an indication of the strategic direction One Leisure is taking in order to address the financial deficit. The report explained how One Leisure is being restructured and how it intended to achieve realistic growth objectives with a reduced cost base without significant reduction to service levels.

As of 1 April 2015 the 'Advantage' membership will not be available to new Members, instead four different membership packages will be introduced.

The update report and its contents were noted by Cabinet who also requested that a further report be presented to Cabinet in six months, and that the relevant Scrutiny Panel should be included.

EXECUTIVE PORTFOLIO FOR ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has welcomed Councillor S Cawley, Executive Councillor for Organisational Change and Development, to its meeting. Councillor Cawley had been invited to the meeting to discuss his plans for his portfolio.

Councillor Cawley informed the Panel that the Leader of the Council was of the view that the organisation needs to improve its robustness and employees' morale and that employees are key to the delivery of services. The new portfolio demonstrated the Cabinet's commitment to these issues. Councillor Cawley's role will be to:

- Give strategic support to the Corporate Management Team;
- Embed the Workforce Development Strategy into the organisation;
- Introduce a new appraisal process;
- Promote talent management and succession planning;
- Oversee the Council's relationship with LGSS;
- Support the Staff Council;
- Improve the staff survey and make use of its results; and
- Ensure the "people agenda" was considered in every debate that took place.

The Panel has discussed the effect of the new portfolio on existing Executive Councillors' responsibilities for staff matters and on the Employment Panel. Members also considered LGSS, the staff survey, the First Contact counselling service, the role of the union and the use of 360° appraisals. Councillor Cawley invited Members to establish a dialogue on staff matters.

The Chairman has offered the Panel's assistance with the Executive Councillor's work.

INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Economic Overview and Scrutiny Panel has decided to discuss the terms of the Investment Strategy prior to its publication as a draft.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

The Development Management Panel has considered nine applications of which three have been approved, five refused and one deferred. One of the decisions to refuse an application was contrary to the Officer recommendation.

DESIGN CODES

The Development Management Panel has given consideration to two Design Codes. One relating to Key Phase 1 of the Alconbury Weald development has been approved. The other in respect of the development at Bearscroft Farm, Godmanchester has been deferred for further consideration of various matters raised by the Panel. The main issues were around transport and parking, specifically near the school and the sports field. There also were more general questions about the provision of parking for residential properties and the width of the roads.

WINTRINGHAM PARK, CAMBRIDGE ROAD, ST NEOTS

The Development Management Panel has been updated on the mixed use urban extension at Wintringham Park, Cambridge Road, St Neots. Members has noted progress of negotiations on Caxton Gibbet, primary school size, open space requirements, the local highway network and public footpaths.

SERVICE PLAN FOR FOOD LAW ENFORCEMENT 2015/16

The Licensing & Protection Panel has considered the content of the draft Service Plan for Food Law Enforcement for 2015/16. The Plan has been developed to comply with the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and incorporates the aims and objectives of the service, the resources available and a review of work undertaken during the previous year. The Plan has been written earlier than in previous years with the intention that it should be approved by Council at the start of the operational year.

Members' attention has been drawn to the developments that are planned for the service in 2015-16, which are in addition to the programmed and reactive work. Members have sought clarification and have asked questions on a number of these proposed activities.

The Panel's attention has also been drawn to the resources that are available to deliver the 2015/16 Plan and Members have noted that there is a reduction in budgetary provision of 4.85% on the previous financial year.

Having noted that the draft Plan was based upon the service remaining fully staffed and that the service plan would be under-resourced if staffing levels are not maintained, Members have expressed concerns at the failure to recruit to an existing vacancy within the Commercial Team. Having noted that there is no statutory timescale for the approval of the Plan and that by the date of their next meeting it would be possible to provide an update on the recruitment situation, the Panel has agreed that consideration of the Service Plan should be deferred to their next meeting in June 2015.

In terms of Members' involvement with the Service Plan, concerns have been

expressed that the Panel only has an opportunity to consider the Plan on an annual basis. Members are of the opinion that there should be a regular role for Panel Members during the course of the year to monitor performance against predicted activity levels and to review resourcing issues.

GUIDELINES RELATING TO THE RELEVANCE AND TREATMENT OF CONVICTIONS – HACKNEY CARRIAGE AND PRIVATE HIRE DRIVERS

Subject to the inclusion of 'perjury' and 'perversion of the course of justice' to the list of dishonesty offences, the Licensing and Protection Panel has approved a set of revised guidelines relating to the relevance and treatment of convictions for hackney carriage and private hire drivers. The guidelines which are designed to ensure consistency in practice have been revised to reflect recent legislative changes and to provide greater clarity on the treatment of convictions received by existing drivers.

LICENSING AND PROTECTION APPLICATIONS SUB-GROUP

The Licensing & Protection Panel has noted the details of the six meetings of the Applications Sub-Group which have taken place between 11th November and 10th March 2015.