

NORTH EAST JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

31 July 2015

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Chair: Councillor Ray Martin-Wells, Hartlepool Borough Council

Stockton Borough Council:
Councillor Hall

South Tyneside Council:
Councillor Brady

Northumberland County Council:
Councillors Sambrook and Nisbet

Newcastle City Council:
Councillor Mendelson

North Tyneside Council:
Councillor Brooks

Durham County Council:
Councillor Robinson

Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Dryden

Also Present: Yvonne Ormston and Paul Liversidge, North East Ambulance Service
Stephen Gwilym, Durham County Council
Peter Mennear, Stockton Borough Council
Karen Christon, Newcastle City Council
Paul Baldasera, South Tyneside Borough Council
Angela Frisby, Gateshead Borough Council
Sharon Ranade, North Tyneside Borough Council
Elise Pout, Middlesbrough Borough Council
Paul Allen, Northumberland County Council

Officers: Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager (HBC)
Denise Wimpenny, Principal Democratic Services (HBC)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Kay, Redcar and Cleveland, Councillor Green, Gateshead Borough Council, Councillor Turner, Newcastle City Council, Councillor Javed Stockton Borough Council and the Member representative from Sunderland City Council.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None.

3. **Resignation of Vice-Chair Councillor Richards and Appointment of Replacement**

In the absence of any nominations, the Chair advised that the position of Vice-Chair would remain vacant.

4. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 February 2015**

Confirmed.

5. **Terms of Reference for the North East Joint Health Scrutiny Committee** *(Chair of the North East Joint Health Scrutiny Committee)*

The Scrutiny Manager (HBC) sought the Committee's agreement to re-confirmation of the terms of reference and protocols for the North East Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation

That the Terms of Reference and Protocols for this Committee be re-affirmed.

6. **Introduction and Performance Update** *(Chief Executive, North East Ambulance Service)*

Representatives from the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) had been invited to the meeting to provide an introduction and update on performance of NEAS.

The Chief Executive from NEAS provided a detailed and comprehensive presentation which included information on the current performance of the service and the measures that had recently been introduced to improve performance. The Committee was advised of the recent links that had been

established with Teesside University to address the shortage nationally of paramedics, support mechanisms in place for staff as well as the future role of the ambulance service following the Government's review of mobile treatment services. The Chief Executive was pleased to report that the North East Ambulance Service had recently achieved network vanguard status, the benefits of which were outlined.

In support of the presentation, further information was provided in a report, a copy of which was tabled at the meeting, that had been presented on ambulance A&E activity to Tees Valley Joint Health Scrutiny Committee in relation to the overall current provision of emergency ambulance care services. The report included a summary of key findings, ambulance activity including response times by ambulance trust, national benchmarking data up to May 2015, patient experience information, community first responder and third party performance as well as workforce data in terms of sickness absence and vacancies.

In response to concerns raised by a Member regarding perception that Teesside was a secondary priority in terms of coverage and response, the Chief Executive, whilst acknowledging difficulties in hot spot rural areas, provided assurances that the aim was to provide a consistent high level service across the North East and highlighted that work was currently ongoing with the police and the fire services in relation to co-responding with a view to improving services in rural areas. It was highlighted that work was also ongoing with CCGs and Urgent Care Centres with a view to reducing the number of transfers to hospital where possible.

The representatives responded to a number of issues raised by Members in relation to the information provided in the report. Clarification was provided regarding the proportion of calls meeting the response times, examples of the challenges faced by the NEAS, paramedic/student training arrangements and how training provision with other emergency services could be shared and more effective. Examples of how a co-responding scheme would operate including the benefits of such a scheme was also outlined. The Chief Executive placed emphasis upon the importance of extending in-house training and work was ongoing to progress this issue.

Discussion ensued as to how the paramedic shortfall could be addressed. The Chair referred to assurances that had been given by the Ambulance Service at a recent Tees Valley Joint Committee that capacity issues would be resolved by 2014 and concerns were raised that this had subsequently been extended to 2016. The importance of retaining students in the North East with a view to actively recruiting paramedics to vacant posts was emphasised. Reference was made to the continuing heavy reliance on third party providers and the request by Members at the last meeting that the viability of student sponsorship with a tie in period, as a means of addressing the paramedic shortfall and aid staff retention be explored. Disappointment was expressed that feedback had not been received in this regard.

A query was raised regarding the current position in terms of ambulances queuing outside hospitals due to delays in hospital admissions. In response, the Committee was advised that whilst the pressures arising as a result of hospital delays had reduced, discussions and work were ongoing with hospital trusts to manage this issue.

Recommendation

- (i) That the contents of the presentation and comments of Members be noted.
- (ii) That the NEAS explore the suggestion of Members in relation to student sponsorship as detailed above, feedback from which to be reported to this Committee as soon as possible.

7. Selection of Potential Topics for Inclusion in the Committee's 2015/16 Work Programme *(Joan Stevens, Scrutiny Manager)*

Members consideration was requested of potential topics for inclusion into the work programme for the North East Joint Health Scrutiny Committee for the 2015/16 Municipal Year. In considering the development of a potential work programme item, the Directors of Public Health across the region and each Local Authority representative had been consulted and the potential topics that had been suggested were included in the report. In order to identify a suitable topic for investigation a PICK scoring system had been utilised, an explanation of which was attached as an Appendix to the report.

The Committee was advised to be cautious in setting an overly ambitious work programme and a maximum of one topic for the coming year was recommended to allow for flexibility in its work programme for emerging issues and referrals.

During the discussion that ensued on the potential work programme items, a number of preferences were suggested including the wider issue around GP provision as well as recruitment, encouraging people to use pharmacies for minor ailments and other services where provided as well as 7 day NHS working. Following debate, the majority of Members supported the issue of encouraging people to use pharmacies for minor ailments and other services as their chosen work programme topic for this municipal year.

In terms of taking this issue forward the Committee's approval was sought for the Scrutiny Manager, in consultation with the Chair and officer representatives to scope the investigation for consideration at the next meeting. The Chair indicated that the level of support regionally would need to be explored in order to determine the depth of the investigation.

A Member highlighted capacity issues within their organisation and the

difficulties they would encounter in providing any support.

Recommendation

- (i) That encouraging people to use pharmacies for minor ailments and other services be undertaken as the Committee's main topic for investigation during the 2015/16 municipal year.
- (ii) That authority be delegated to the Chair of this Committee together with the Scrutiny Manager (HBC) to scope the investigation for consideration at the next meeting.

8. Chairman's urgent items

None

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Chair reported that the next meeting would be held on 1 October 2015 at 2.00 pm – Committee Room B, Civic Centre, Hartlepool

The meeting closed at 11.20 am.

CHAIR