

Report of the Hertfordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee for the Health in Dacorum Meeting of 10th March 2021

The Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Health Scrutiny Committee (HSC) met on 18th December 2020.

At this meeting it considered a report on the East of England Ambulance Service Trust (EEAST) following the Care Quality Commission (CQC) report which found EEAST overall “requiring improvement”. In response to member questions about ambulance queuing and handover delays, the Committee was informed that a member of EEAST staff works within hospitals’ A&E departments to speed up the handover process. It was noted that EEAST was working with Fire & Rescue and the military to increase response to patients in the community.

There were further questions on the impact on sickness absence and mental health, whether other ambulance trusts were experiencing sexual harassment and bullying issues, how was EEAST drilling down the cultural issues at a local level and what alternative pathways were available for the mental health triage centre.

The Chairman requested an update at an appropriate time.

The HSC received an update on recent engagement undertaken by NHS England/NHS Improvement about the future of services at the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre (MVCC). A patient and public consultation supported a single site model. Patients highlighted that some tests and treatments such as blood tests, chemotherapy and radiotherapy could be done locally. It was noted that chemotherapy was conducted at a number of district general hospitals and the NHS was exploring how to do more locally.

The HSC received an update on progress in implementing a hub and spoke” model for vascular services in Herts and west Essex.

The HSC received an update on the Integrated Care System (ICS) for Herts and West Essex. It updated members on the impact of Covid-19 on services and how recovery was progressing. The ICS provided information on several areas identified by members including staffing, the Mental Health Integrated Care Partnership and the Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) for East & North Herts and Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Groups (ENHCCG and HVCCG).

The HSC received a report updating members on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Action Plan. The update informed members that there would be a series of webinars for BAME communities in January and February 2021, which would include Covid-19 education.

A Topic Group meeting was held on 8th February 2021 to discuss the West Herts. Hospital Trust (WHHT) estate. The Topic Group did not consider the decision to continue with acute hospital provision centralised on the Watford site as WHHT had already made this decision. The discussion centred around whether the proposals were a substantial variation in service. The Topic Group concluded that the proposal to rebuild or refurbish the WHHT estate was not a substantial variation in service or development of the health service in Hertfordshire and therefore should not be called in to the Secretary of State.

Unfortunately I was unavailable to attend the meeting because I was practising as a healthcare professional. I believe that the proposals are a substantial change in service. Had I been able to attend the meeting, I would have argued and voted that they were a substantial change in service and to be referred to the Secretary of State.

C/Cllr Fiona Guest