



Service Policy Panel

Date: 19/09/2006
Open Report

Report of: The Health Task Group

REPORT OF THE HEALTH TASK GROUP

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Health Task Group was established by full Council on Wednesday 19th April 2006, following a motion submitted by Councillors G W Ballinger, Mrs S M Hayward, Mrs F M Oborski, M M G Oborski and R Wheway on behalf of the Liberal Group.
- 1.2 The motion was as follows;

“THIS COUNCIL totally opposes the proposed £30m reduction in the spending of Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust which will lead to the loss of 720 posts from across the three hospitals involved at Kidderminster, Worcester and Redditch.

Council believes that the loss of 1 in 7 staff will further undermine public confidence in local Health Service management, destroy staff morale and inevitably lead to deterioration in services to patients and the public. This further destabilisation of Hospital Services across this County is totally and absolutely unacceptable.

Council calls upon the County Council Health Services Scrutiny Panel to conduct an immediate scrutiny exercise into the detailed implications of the proposed spending cut.

Council determines to immediately establish a Task Group to co-ordinate the Council’s opposition to this latest ill begotten threat to local Hospital Services.”

- 1.2 Originally, the Group comprised the following Members:

Councillor C D Nicholls (Chairman)
Councillor J Aston
Councillor Mrs H E Dyke
Councillor Mrs J Fairbrother-Millis
Councillor Mrs S M Hayward
Councillor J Simmonds

- 1.3 The Chairman subsequently resigned and a new Chairman was not appointed.
- 1.4 Councillor J Holden, the Wyre Forest Representative on the County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee was invited to attend to provide information regarding the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee and to also feed information from Wyre Forest back to the County Council.

2 KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The Group was told that the County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee was holding a Question and Answer Session on 15th May 2006 at 9.30am, which would give members of the Health Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to put questions to John Rostill and Michael O'Riordan, Chairman and Chief Executive of the NHS Acute Trust.
- 2.2 Members decided that Wyre Forest views should be fed into the Worcestershire Health Scrutiny and they agreed to formulate questions for Councillor Holden to put forward at the County Council's Health Scrutiny Question and Answer session.
- 2.3 The Group also put forward some questions for the County Council Health Scrutiny Committee meeting with the Chief Executives of each of the Worcestershire PCTs. Following that meeting, Eamonn Kelly, the Acting Chief Executive of Wyre Forest PCT agreed to attend a Health Task Group meeting on 23rd June 2006.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Following the Health Group meeting on 23rd June, the following motions were submitted to and supported by Council on 19th July 2006. As the motions were all related to the proposed cuts in PCT budgets, it was agreed unanimously that they should be approved as a combined motion and sent to all Worcestershire MPs; the Acting Corporate Director Advantage West Midlands; the County Council's Director of Adult and Community Services; the Chairman of the County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee; the Chairman of the Strategic Health Authority; the Chairman and Acting Chief Executive of the Wyre Forest Primary Care Trust.
- 3.2 "Following the Health Seminar on Friday 23rd June and Mr Eamonn Kelly's presentation:

This Council deplores the financial top-slicing of the Primary Care Trust Budgets in Worcestershire which is forcing the three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to dramatically cut services across the County.

We urge the Strategic Health Authority to re-consider the decision to top-slice budgets, bearing in mind that the majority of PCTs would, this year, have been in financial balance but for this top-slicing.

We are further concerned at the impact these changes will have on many of the “pooled budgets” supported by this Council under our partnership arrangements.”

- 3.3 “This Council wishes to express its grave concern over the sudden, unannounced withdrawal of Doctor emergency cover for the people of Worcestershire during the hours of 12.00 pm and 8.00 am and especially the people of Wyre Forest District whom we represent.

We call on the relevant Authority to restore appropriate Doctor led emergency cover during the night hours.”

We urge the regional Health Authority to look again at all these proposals.”

- 3.4 “The proposals for cuts by the Primary Care Trust give this Council great concern, especially those aimed at the most vulnerable members of our community, particularly the young and the elderly.

Community Services are already overstretched and underfunded. Further cuts can only jeopardise these services still further and we call on the decision makers to reject these drastic proposals.”

- 3.5 As the issue is ongoing, further information can be found on the Worcestershire County Council’s website and the Wyre Forest Representative on the County Council’s Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to provide updates to the Council’s Service Policy Panel.

- 3.6 The Group felt that it had been a useful task and were pleased about the opportunity to feed their comments through to the Worcestershire County Council’s Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The work of the group has been built upon by the submission of the three further motions to council on 19th July 2006.

3 APPENDICES

- Notes regarding the Question and Answer Session with John Rostill And Michael O’Riordan, Chairman And Chief Executive Of The NHS Acute Trust.
- Letter regarding the Question and Answer Session with Eamonn Kelly, Acting Chief Executive of Wyre Forest Primary Care Trust.

*** Note: The Primary Care Trust have decided not to implement the reduction in beds outlined in paragraph 3 of the letter on page 2 of 7)**

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH JOHN ROSTILL AND MICHAEL O'RIORDAN, CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE NHS ACUTE TRUST – 15TH MAY 2006

When will the Trust's recovery plan be presented to and ratified by the Strategic Health Authority and when will we know whether it has been accepted? If the Strategic Health Authority does not accept the recovery plan, what is the alternative plan of action? Will there be further cuts?

The Trust's recovery plan has been presented and ratified by the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) and the final details will be given following a meeting at the end of June 2006. A report will be given on the 10th July 2006 to the County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There would be no further need to cut jobs.

What are the early indications of staff reductions being achieved through voluntary redundancies, recognising the Trust has also frozen posts and expects natural wastage to help as to and how are all of the redundancy packages going to be paid for?

70 redundancies will go in clinical services and 650 from across all staff groups. Detailed plans are being developed for natural t/o, voluntary and compulsory redundancies. 100 positions have been frozen and 200 voluntary redundancies have been received. The trust will take out a bank loan of 17.5 million, of which 5 million will be put towards costs of change. This will include redundancies.

When will the Kidderminster Minor Injuries Unit and Treatment Centre be used to its full capacity?

More detail will be provided at the end of June 2006.

What jobs and services will be lost in the County and in Wyre Forest?

Whilst details will not be known until the end of June 2006, the mention of Kidderminster Hospital did provoke a favourable response. There will be a transfer of more elective procedures to Kidderminster along with the transfer of staff.