

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the Health Scrutiny Sub-Committee held at the County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 5 September 2006** at **9.45 a.m.**

COUNCILLOR J PRIESTLEY in the Chair.

Durham County Council

Councillors Bell, Hunter, Simmons, Stelling, Stradling and Trippett

Chester le Street District Council

Councillors Armstrong and Harrison

Derwentside District Council

Councillor Agnew

Durham City Council

Councillor Smith

Easington District Council

Councillor Campbell

Sedgefield Borough Council

Councillors Crosby and Gray

Teesdale District Council

Councillors Hamilton and Stansfield

Wear Valley District Council

Councillor Harker and Lee

Co-opted Members

Councillor M Iveson

Other Members

Councillors C Gray, Holroyd Magee and Meir

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Carroll and Porter.

A1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A2 Ambulance Services in Rural Areas – Response to the Public Consultation

The Sub Committee considered reports of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny and the Durham Dales Primary Care Trust about the responses received in relation to the consultation document about the proposed changes to

ambulance services affecting residents of Teesdale and Weardale (for copy see file of Minutes).

Helen Suddes of Durham Dales Primary Care Trust advised the Sub Committee that as part of the consultation process four public meetings had been held. Two substantial petitions had been received from residents of Upper Teesdale and Upper Weardale together with numerous individual letters from members of the public. In addition a report from the Durham Dales PPI Forum had also been received. The Board will consider these when they make their decision on the proposals.

The main areas of concern were the qualifications and experience of the ambulance crew and the proposal to support the Community Paramedic with an Emergency Care Assistant rather than with a Technician. In addition there was concern that the proposals would mean the loss of local knowledge when attending an emergency call. It was explained that strong feelings were expressed at the public meetings about the need for the retention of the ambulance stations. The PCT Board will consider the options at its meeting on 20 September 2006 which will be held at Glaxo Sports Club in Barnard Castle.

A representative of the Durham Dales PPI Forum outlined the main recommendations of their report. A copy of the PPI Forum report has been placed in the Members resource centre.

Councillor Shuttleworth was of the opinion that the closure of the ambulance stations could cost lives and that the proposals discriminated against rural areas.

Councillor Bell expressed concern that any ambulance based at Barnard Castle would spend its time servicing locations in the Darlington area. He suggested that the Sub Committee should consider the PPI Forum report as part of its deliberations. The Head of Overview and Scrutiny explained that the recommendations in his report to the Sub Committee captured the key issues identified by the PPI Forum, local communities and the consultation exercise.

Helen Suddes reiterated that the PPI Forum report will be considered along with all other submissions by the Board at its meeting on 20 September 2006.

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny confirmed that the Sub Committee would revisit the issue when the Durham Dales PCT has made a decision on the proposed changes.

Resolved:

That the recommendations detailed in paragraphs 8 to 11 of the report be agreed.

A3 Southmoor Hospital – Response to the Public Consultation on the Closure of the Holmside Ward and the Temporary Relocation of Other Services

The Sub Committee considered a report of the Head of Overview and Scrutiny about the response to the consultation on the closure of the Holmside Ward and the temporary relocation of services from South Moor Hospital (for copy see file of Minutes).

Edmund Lovell of the County Durham and Darlington Acute Hospitals Trust explained that patients who experienced delayed discharge from hospital used the beds. This was no longer an issue and there is now very little use for the beds. In addition there was staffing difficulties on the Ward. The other services on the site would be provided from other nearby sites. Some of the services will eventually be provided at the new Stanley Health Centre. As part of the consultation process two public meetings were held and a meeting was also held with the Green Corridor Partnership. A presentation was also given to Derwentside District Council Scrutiny Panel. The key issues expressed were about the loss of the beds and their possible future need, travel for local patients and the future use of the site.

The local Member, Councillor Hunter was of the opinion that the consultation process had been open and fair.

Resolved:

That the recommendations set out in paragraphs 12 to 15 of the report be agreed.