

County Council

22 June 2022

Public Question from Dr L Welch (speaking on behalf of “Keep Our NHS Public North East”)

Further to the Health and Care Act 2022, “North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System” will gain statutory powers from the beginning of July this year. This ICS will be responsible for commissioning all healthcare from North Cumbria, across to Berwick, down to Whitby, including the whole of County Durham. Whilst this huge area is geographically sub-divided into four ICS “partnerships”, plans from NHS England outline a much-reduced Councillor and public involvement in decision-making regarding our future health services.

Please outline what Durham County Council is doing to promote local participation and scrutiny regarding decision-making, and please confirm that Durham County Council upholds the principle that the NHS must be comprehensive, universal and free at the point of use and based on the clinical needs of patients – not on the new Integrated Care Boards financial considerations?

Response by Councillor P Sexton, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult and Health Services.

Thank you for your question.

The Council welcomes the increased opportunities for Councillors to become members of the Integrated Care Board as set out in the guidance linked to the Health and Care Act 2022. Originally Councillors and others would not have been members. However, following engagement with the Government by representative bodies such as the Local Government Association this changed.

The Council and the County Durham Care Partnership are actively involved with the ICS at two levels.

Firstly focusing on County Durham we are working closely with the ICS to co-produce a Joint Committee for Health and Care in County Durham. This will be accountable to and give regular reports to the Health and Wellbeing Board and be part of the governance arrangements of the Council and our partners. This happens now for the County Durham Care Partnership.

Senior staff from the ICS have attended the Health and Wellbeing Board and committed to working with us on the Joint Committee. Our aim is to have as much decision-making and resources as possible at a County Durham level.

Overview and Scrutiny will continue to have an important role in the assurance of service quality and, as now, will receive regular reports.

Secondly, we are working with other Councils in South Tyneside and Sunderland and the ICS to put in place an Integrated Care Partnership which has had significant input from Cabinet Members. This arrangement will work on matters of common interest across County Durham and neighbouring areas.

The ICS comes into being on 1 July 2022. We have engaged positively with the ICS and will continue to do so on behalf of the residents of County Durham.