

PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 13 January 2021

Present: Councillor C Spriggs (Chair)

Councillors L Rennie C Muspratt
T Cottier S Spoor
J Johnson M Sullivan
I Lewis J Walsh
D Mitchell S Whittingham

10 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

11 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Christine Muspratt declared a personal interest in item 6 (strategic developments in the NHS) as she had one daughter who worked for the NHS and another daughter who was a GP.

Councillor Tony Cottier declared a personal interest in item 6 (strategic developments in the NHS) as he was the Director of a company engaged in the refurbishment of an NHS crisis café in Birkenhead.

Councillor Michal Sullivan declared a personal interest in item 6 (strategic developments in the NHS) as he had a daughter who was a GP and worked in oncology.

12 MINUTES

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of the Partnerships Committee held on 9 November 2020 be agreed as a correct record, subject to it being noted that Councillor Christina Muspratt declared, in relation to Minute 5, that she had a daughter who was the manager of the integrated discharge team.

13 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Kevin Donovan had submitted and asked the following question of the Chair:
Given that:

1. The introduction of a so-called integrated care system (ICS) for Cheshire and Merseyside will lead to wholesale further privatisation, fragmentation and loss of democratic accountability in our National Health Service; and that:
2. Any changes will end democratic control of a genuinely NATIONAL health service, including even the limited accountability provided by the existence of a Wirral clinical commissioning group; and that:

3. At a previous meeting it was resolved *“That the Partnerships Committee considers that local people, patient groups and other invested parties be consulted before any large scale Clinical Commissioning Group mergers are considered for Wirral. Furthermore, this Committee calls for a meeting with our counterparts from all other authorities involved in these proposals.”*; and that:
4. Opposition to the plan for so-called integrated care is the policy of many political parties (including the party of Wirral Council’s majority); and that:
5. Campaigners have exposed the dangerous rationale behind these proposed changes to the NHS (see for example [We say NO! to proposed NHS legislation that would restrict access to care and profit global companies – Calderdale and Kirklees 999 Call for the NHS \(wordpress.com\)](#))

Can I ask:

Will this Committee pause all involvement in the development of the Cheshire and Merseyside ICS, including any nomination of members to the new Joint Health Scrutiny Committee for Cheshire and Merseyside, pending such consultations and meeting referred to in 3 above?

The Chair answered the question as follows:

The Partnership Committee of Wirral Council is new and have a statutory role to scrutinise new proposals and developments in the NHS and it is the Committee’s role to hear a range of views in this matter, including those of the NHS, the public and other stakeholders. It is really important that you raise something that I voted with along with colleagues at our first meeting that the Partnerships Committee consider that local people, patients groups and other invested parties be consulted before any large scale Clinical Commissioning Group mergers are considered for Wirral, and furthermore the Committee calls for a meeting with our counterparts in other authorities involved in these proposals and I was proud to vote in favour of that as were my colleagues on the Committee. We will continue to liaise closely with Health and Care Committee of Wirral Council in relation to the views of elected Members who are more closely engaged with the details of the care and health system matters that are developing and reassure you as Chair that I am determined that we will undertake this role with due diligence.

14 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

There were no statements or petitions.

15 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

There were no questions from Members.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NHS

Simon Banks, Chief Officer of NHS Wirral CCG introduced this report. On 26th November 2020 NHS England/Improvement (NHSE/I) published 'Integrating Care: Next steps to building strong and effective integrated care systems across England' which set out proposals for legislative reform and focused on the operational direction of travel for the NHS from 2021 onwards. The report summarised the proposals. The public consultation closed on 8 January and a response was submitted that due regard should be given to Wirral as a place with the local authority continuing to have a role in partnership, with strategic leadership through Wirral Health and Care Commissioning Board.

Members debated the issue and strong concerns were expressed at the lack of detail of the implications of changes, the potential reduction of scrutiny and the lack of opportunity for users to have their voices heard, although there was a legal duty to consult. There was also concern at the amount of jargon in the consultation document and at the lack of opportunity to affect the outcome of the proposals.

Members also asked about particular aspects of the proposals. They were reassured that services would remain free at the point of delivery and that lobbying continued to ensure that the Council area was still distinct.

Councillor Sarah Spoor proposed an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Christine Muspratt. This was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted and the Partnership Committee will continue to return to this crucial piece of work to enable us to scrutinise the effectiveness of the proposals so that we can see that they are turning into effective actions which will ensure that improvements in the health and well being of our residents takes place and that serious health inequalities that exist in our Borough are tackled and ended.

17 HEALTHWATCH WIRRAL - UPDATE

Following a discussion held at a workshop in December 2020, the Chair and Spokespersons of the Partnerships Committee requested an update from Healthwatch Wirral. The core purpose of Healthwatch was to be the consumer champion for health and care service users. They involved patients, service users and the public in shaping local health and care services and raised awareness of their views and experiences in relation to those services amongst those in charge of services including commissioners and providers. Their vision was to ensure that the voice of the individual was heard and services were responsive to their needs, and that everyone had the

opportunity to have their say and understood how and when to access their local health and social care services.

Karen Prior, Chief Executive of HealthWatch Wirral provided the update, explaining that HealthWatch Wirral:

- had a volunteer board of Directors and five staff.
- had won two national HealthWatch awards in the last four years.
- had diverted from their planned work to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic, working on vaccination and testing sites, printing and distributing thousands of leaflets for feedback.
- was working on meeting with families of residents in care homes about their experiences.
- called all patients discharged from hospital on pathway zero (requiring no support) to check if they are caring for others.

Members thanked Karen for the presentation and asked questions which drew out extra information such as that people were confused about the requirement for a second Covid vaccine treatment and whether the first vaccine was enough to allow normal activity to be resumed whereas it still allowed transmission. Members were also interested in restarting visits to care homes when the pandemic was under control, and in dealing with the low wages and stress of staff in the care sector.

RESOLVED - That the HealthWatch Wirral update be noted.

18 **CITIZENS ADVICE WIRRAL - UPDATE**

Following a discussion held at a workshop in December 2020, the Chair and Spokespersons of the Partnerships Committee requested an update and presentation from Citizens Advice Wirral. Citizens Advice Wirral was a local charity providing advice, information, advocacy and representation across Wirral. They had provided free, impartial and confidential advice to Wirral residents since 1939 and were formerly known as Wirral Citizens Advice Bureau, were members of the national Citizens Advice charity but were independent from them. They had 160 staff and were funded through a range of contracts and grants. Their services included general advice, specialist debt advice and specialist primary care mental health advice and advocacy. Pension wise, a specialist pension advice service, and a Financial Capability advice service were also delivered at Citizens Advice Wirral by other local Citizens Advice organisations. Citizens Advice Wirral actively worked for change in the policies and practices of organisations that impacted on the lives of clients.

Carol Johnson-Eyre, Chief Executive, and Jeannette Morgan, Deputy Chief Executive, gave a presentation to Members about the organisation and its workload and client base. Highest demand was from ages 30-59 in the most deprived Wards. 61% of clients had a disability or long-term health condition.

The main advice was on benefits, debt, housing, employment, relationships, immigration, tax, consumer rights, discrimination, abuse and hate crime. It also provided services such as gambling support.

Since the lockdown began over 43,000 clients had been supported, with 65% of website users being new. The nation organisation had been contacted by 120,000 Wirral users. The key issues presented were concerning: benefit applications; furloughing entitlement; loss of income; non-Covid safe working environment; relationship breakdown; preventing homelessness; keeping warm; evictions; digital exclusion; mental health; loneliness; and bereavement. Emerging issues included people more excluded by not being digitally linked; people newly applying for benefits; long Covid health conditions affecting employment; housing; and Brexit.

Members asked questions and were told in answer that 80% of calls were answered but the limit was in funding, although the reduction in partner organisations, who may have taken calls, also caused additional calls.

RESOLVED - That the presentation and update by Citizens Advice Wirral be noted.

19 **APPOINTMENTS TO THE JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHESHIRE & MERSEYSIDE**

In accordance with the protocol established as the framework for the operation of joint health scrutiny arrangements across the local authorities of Cheshire and Merseyside, the Partnerships Committee was requested to nominate Members to sit on the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee to reflect Wirral's own political balance. Depending on the issue to be scrutinised, meetings will be attended by either 2 or 3 Members. If three Members, the proportion would be 2 Labour and 1 Conservative but if two, then only one Labour Member and one Conservative Member.

RESOLVED - That Councillors Christine Spriggs, Christina Muspratt and Leslie Rennie be appointed to the Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.

20 **PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Partnerships Committee, in co-operation with the Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. The Council had a number of statutory scrutiny functions including matters relating to the health of the authority's population, the activities of those responsible for crime and disorder strategies, as embodied by the Safer Wirral Partnership, under the Police and Justice Act 2006, and flood risk management and coastal erosion management functions which may affect the local authority's area. These overview and scrutiny functions were to be carried out by the Partnerships Committee, which would

also scrutinise the functions and responsibilities undertaken by other public bodies within the Borough. The work programme for the Partnerships Committee is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

There had been a Workshop in December 2020 when priorities were provided and the resulting list was attached to the report and is attached to these minutes.

RESOLVED - That the Partnerships Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year be noted.