

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES AND OLDER PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

19 APRIL 2012

7.15pm-9.25pm

PRESENT: Councillors; Suzanne Evans (Chair) , Peter McCabe (Vice – Chair, Margaret Brierly, Nick Draper (substitute) Brenda Fraser, Maurice Groves, Logie Lohendran, Greg Udeh

Co-optees: Myrtle Agutter, Sheila Knight, Saleem Sheikh

ALSO PRESENT: Adam Wickings, Managing Director for NHS Sutton and Merton NHS Southwest London, Valentine Mulholland, Energy Manager, EDF Energy, Dr Val Day, Interim Director for Public Health.

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Maurice Groves and Nick Draper declared an interest as Board Members of Merton Priory Homes

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sam Thomas and Barbara Price

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd February were agreed

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

A Panel member noted that feedback had not been received from the Adult Social Care team regarding this Panel's comments on the service plan, particularly in relation to the impact of the rise in costs of telecare equipment. The scrutiny officer explained that the department had only just been given the information and would respond within the next week. The Chair asked that this information be circulated to the Panel as a matter of urgency.

5 GP FUNDING REVIEW – VERBAL UPDATE

Adam Wickings reported that there has been a delay in implementing the changes following the GP Funding review. Practices are now expected to start the new regime on the 1st July, although some may be ready to implement earlier.

Following the emergency discussion regarding concerns at Vineyard Hill Surgery, and the concern that it may have to close as a result of the impact of the GP funding review, Adam Wickings reported that he had met with Vineyard Hill surgery last week to discuss their concerns. As a result, the Local Medical Council has been enlisted to support the Surgery and help them work through their concerns. There are other surgeries which have a similar model to the one that is proposed for Vineyard Hill and these examples are being used to help them overcome the challenges to meet with the new requirements. Adam Wickings maintained his view that he does not believe that the surgery needs to close. He will be visiting all the surgeries in the borough before July to discuss the new contract framework and will help those

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surgeries that are facing a challenge in making a transition to the new process. Adam Wickings agreed to come back to the Panel in July to discuss the new transition.

Panel members asked for a more details on the impact of the changes on GP Surgeries including information on which will lose and which will gain money. Adam Wickings agreed to provide this information subject to ensuring that it is not business sensitive. A panel member pointed out that surgeries receive public money and must therefore be accountable, also given the new role for clinical commissioning and the role GP's will have, it is even more important that information about public money is available for scrutiny. Adam Wickham supported this position.

RESOLVED

That Adam Wickings attend the Panel meeting in July to provide a further update on the implementation of the GP Funding review and data on the financial impact within individual surgeries

6 UPDATE ON WARM HOMES

The Chair congratulated officers for their progress with this work, particularly Steve Nottage Environmental Health and Housing Manager who had attracted substantial funding to the borough.

Steve Nottage reported that with the help of colleagues the council were able to put together a bid for a grant from the Department of Health from the Warm Homes, Healthy People Fund and were awarded £174,411. As well as giving an overview of the projects that had been implemented as a result of the funding, he also reported that there had been some teething problems in sending out a energy booklet to residents. Some households had received more than one copy of the booklet and it was dated for 2011 giving the impression that it was obsolete in 2012. Steve Nottage reported that this feedback would be used to improve services in the future.

Dr Val Day also thanked Steve Nottage for his excellent work on the bid and the amount of money received. She reported that there were no recent updates in regards to tackling excess winter deaths. The good news however was that in past meetings we had discussed what could be done with no new money then the funding arrived. It is now important that the winter plan is put in place.

A panel member expressed concern that local traders were using inappropriate methods to try and persuade people to get loft insulation.

Steve Nottage reported that security and safety is important, our Trading Standards Team and the Police are aware of these issues and are doing their best to tackle it. Codes of practice have been put in place for genuine traders, including to make them recognisable. For example they should wear a badge, make appointments before visiting people's homes.

Panel members suggested that My Merton could be used to warn people about rouge traders.

It was reported that sometimes it is difficult to synchronise receipt of funding with My

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Merton deadlines. A panel member suggested that a flyer is sent to community groups

7 EDF ENERGY TACKLING FUEL POVERTY

Valentine Mulholland, Energy Manager, EDF Energy, reported that EDF is one of the largest energy suppliers in the UK. Since 2005 the company has engaged in a range of initiatives to tackle fuel poverty, they are required by the government to focus some of their profits in alleviating fuel poverty amongst the most vulnerable. The Panel asked a number of questions including what is the penalty if they do not reach their targets to alleviate poverty amongst vulnerable groups, how do you identify a vulnerable group and why are there so many bill tariffs. It was reported that tackling fuel poverty is a requirement of the fuel companies license and they will be financially penalised if they do not meet their targets. Valentine Mulholland said it is difficult to identify those in fuel poverty, EDF tend to focus on those in receipt of certain benefits such as cold weather payments, disability benefits, pension credits, however this does not take into account the working poor. The larger six energy companies are also working towards clearer bills. OFGEM the fuel companies regulator are also conducting a retail market review on simplifying bills.

A panel member pointed out that energy companies say they are implementing a range of measure to tackle fuel poverty but rising fuel costs are affecting everyone, so why do they not just cut the basic cost of fuel?

Valentine Mulholland reported that while she does not work on the commercial side, she can report that £1.6 billion is being re-invested in the commercial fleet. The cost of fuel is determined by prices on the world market. The supply side of the business does not make a profit and EDF does not make unreasonable profits

8 TRANSITION OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO THE LONDON BOROUGH OF
MERTON

Dr Val Day gave an overview of the transition process highlighting that there is a lot of work to do but a relatively small budget at £7-8 million.

The Chair asked when a new director would be in post as there was some concern that the best candidates have already been recruited. Dr Day reported that councils are required to have someone in post by the 1st April 2013 or they will have to appoint an interim. Dr Day pointed out that in terms of appointing someone to the post, there are different situations across the UK. There is no difference if councils appoint earlier or later in the year, there will turnover during the year.

In terms of the deadline it was reported that the decision to appoint will be made in June, we will go out to advert in July, recruitment panel to be appointed in September

A Panel member asked that this Panel ask for the Director of Public Health to be appointed sooner rather than later to help with the transition process as well as the new role. It was also asked that a scrutiny task group be set up to look at this issue. Concern was expressed that mental health was being sidelined in the process and

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that funding is usually inadequate when these decisions are made.

The Chair asked how this Panel can highlight their concerns around funding for public health.

Dr Day said that the Health and Wellbeing Board will lead on developing the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, she agrees that mental health needs to be mainstreamed. The funding levels are based on PCT spending for 2010/11, while Dr Day is confident that the PCT estimate is accurate they did not invest in public health as they should have. There are a number of areas that Merton will be able to demonstrate funding shortfalls eg; PCT did not invest in areas that are now mandatory. The population spend in Merton is lower than it should be, Dr Day is putting together a report to submit to the Department of Health. Once her figures are available they will be given to this Panel.

A Panel member pointed out that the transition is complex and will be difficult to deliver in one year, therefore it is essential that the Director is in post. There was also concern about the financial viability of having a Director for both Sutton and Merton, in other areas there is sharing. A panel member also pointed out that Councillors are not represented on the Transaction Board.

Dr Day pointed out that she advises that Merton appoints its own Director of Public Health to give it the focus that it needs and ensure that they get to know the local area. They are looking at areas where costs for public health could be shared across Sutton and Merton.

After a number of Panel members expressed their concern about this transition process it was agreed that the following reference be made to Cabinet:

Having reviewed the Transition Plan and the arrangements that are being put in place to manage the transition of Public Health Functions from the NHS to the London Borough of Merton from 1st April 2013. The Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel is not satisfied that they are fit for purpose for the following reasons:

The Public Health Grant allocated is inadequate

Insufficient account has been taken of mental health in the Transition Plan

There should be cross party councillor representation on the Transaction Board.

9 SCRUTINY REVIEW ON SAFEGUARDING OLDER PEOPLE – DRAFT
REPORT

The report and recommendations were agreed by the Panel

10 IMPLEMENTATION OF QUALITY OF CARE IN NURSING HOMES REVIEW
RECOMMENDATIONS

A panel member expressed concern that there is not enough power to change things in care homes and concern that commercial interests prevail. It was agreed that officers be thanked for their work on this review and that the Panel look to the future

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and continue to address concerns about care homes in other ways.

11 MERTON LINK – VERBAL UPDATE

At the last meeting a panel member raised concern that this Panel was not fulfilling its role in performance monitoring Merton Link and the Chair asked for clarification on the legal duties. The Scrutiny Officer reported that having reviewed the legislation and consulted with the Centre for Public Scrutiny she can report scrutiny does not have a statutory duty to performance monitor the LINK

12 PLANNING THE PANEL'S 2012/13 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel would like a scope to be developed for the following task group ideas:

Transition of Public Health to the London Borough of Merton.

Review of continence services.