

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on Monday 22 March 2021 at 3.30pm remotely via Microsoft Teams

Chairperson: Councillor L Devlin

In attendance:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor P Brown
Councillor R Burgess	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor C Casey	Councillor D Curran
Councillor C Enright	Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor M Gibbons	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor O Magennis
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor H McKee
Councillor R Mulgrew	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor M Savage	Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor G Stokes	Councillor J Tinnelly
Councillor J Trainor	

Officials in attendance: Mr M Lipsett, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr E Devlin, Assistant Director Health & Wellbeing
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms L O'Hare, Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance: **South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust**
Mr S McGoran, Chief Executive
Ms R Coulter, Director of Planning & Performance
Dr D Robinson, Director of Hospital Services
Ms C Campbell, Engagement & Involvement Manager
Dr A Dobbin, Clinical Consultant

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service

Mr M Bloomfield, Chief Executive
Ms R Byrne, Director of Operations

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Mr S Devlin, Chief Executive

SC/007/2021: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

The Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the Special Council Meeting, thanking the representatives from the South Eastern Trust, NIAS and Southern Trust for taking time out from their busy schedule to attend especially under the extreme pressures and challenges currently happening due to the pandemic.

Apologies were received from Councillors Doran, Harte, Howell, McEvoy, Taylor and

the Chief Executive Mrs M Ward.

SC/008/2021: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/009/2021: RESPONSE FROM SOUTH EASTERN & SOCIAL CARE TRUST

Mr S McGoran, Dr D Robinson, Mr A Dobbin and Ms R Coulter provided an update to members on the Consultant Lead Care Centre at the Downe Hospital, the challenges faced due to the third surge and new the variants of Covid 19, and the progress of the vaccination programme to date in the South Eastern Trust.

Members asked the following questions:

- How was the Trust mitigating for new strains of the virus and how effective was the vaccination against those new strains.
- Was there a date or timeframe for when the Accident and Emergency Department would be returned to the Downe Hospital.
- Was there a plan to reduce the Mental Health services in Finneston House.
- Why is there no capital commitment provided to the Downe Hospital in comparison to other hospitals in the Trust, to expand the services required to remain as an integral part of the health network and free up spaces in other hospitals.
- Is there no plans to increase services at the Emergency Department before June 2021, as the Emergency Department missing at present could be the critical difference between life and death depending on what part of the district travelling from.

The delegation responded to the queries as follows:

- Stating clearly for the record, there were no plans to remove or reduce Mental Health services from Finneston House. If there is an increase in demand more resources will be provided to deliver the service.
- There is no evidence that the vaccine cannot cope with new variants, there is very strong evidence to suggest the vaccine is 70% to 80% plus effective in stopping people getting the disease and 100% stopping people getting the disease seriously and requiring hospitalisation or critical care. There is still a big unknown quantity in the new variants, but confidence remains high.
- Aspire to return services that were provided pre-Covid in the Downe Emergency Department, that are safe and sustainable. They don't have the ability to do this at present due to the current pandemic.
- There was significant investment 12 years ago in the building of the new Downe hospital, resulting in far more services being brought than taken away, the hospital has been maximised to its fullest.

- The draft budget just about covers the pay rise for staff, it will not cover inflation, demographic pressures or growth, any new technologies or drugs, any additional capital building or costs of new service developments, encourage members to talk to political parties and see how that can be influenced at an Assembly level.
- Don't have a timeframe when the doors can be opened again in the Downe Accident and Emergency, need 70-80% population to be vaccinated but will continue to build staff up and plan on introducing a lateral flow test which will allow an increase to the types of patients being brought to the Downe.
- Have asked the Commissioner and completed a draft business case about the possibility of installing an MRI scanner .

SC/010/2021: RESPONSE FROM NORTHERN IRELAND
AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr M Bloomfield and Mrs R Byrne provided a detailed presentation to members highlighting some of the context and challenges providing an ambulance service in the Newry Mourne and Down area.

Members asked the following questions:

- Was the Covid situation given priority when assessing the patient for reason calling an ambulance in the first instance i.e stroke or heart attack.
- Private ambulances used do not have the same equipment, professional service and training as normal ambulances.
- Welcomed the new degree course for paramedics graduating in 2024, was there going to be enough to replace the staff that are due to retire or leave the service in the meantime or will there be gaps.
- Is expanding integrated care vehicles still a priority in supporting and bridging the gap in the operation of NIAS.

The delegation responded to the queries as follows:

- Whether a person has symptoms of Covid or not will not make a difference to the priority which they are sent an ambulance. A clinical triage system is used to assess the patient, they will go onto ask some of the questions in relation to Covid to ensure the staff attending have the appropriate PPE etc. but this does not have any bearing on an ambulance being dispatched.
- Ambulances are vans that have been kitted out with high tech equipment, we do use independent ambulance sector providers to supplement capacity who are expected to deliver certain standards to their vehicles and staff however they do not have the same skills and would not attend high level acuity calls.
- 50 student paramedics are graduating in early 2022, a further cohort later this year had been factored into the workforce planning and strategy policy subject to funding, those students are already emergency medical technicians with

lots of experience being trained to a higher level of skills to be a paramedic, There was also plans to recruit people for a 2 year foundation degree programme of the street. This would lead to a continues supply of paramedics each year to keep at current staffing level.

- Integrated care vehicles had been relied on heavily in the past 6 months, they had been used to supplement routine outpatient work and Accident and Emergency support on staggered shifts and evening work which had been very helpful and still continues.

SC/011/2021: RESPONSE FROM SOUTHERN TRUST

Mr S Devlin provided an overview to members on the impact of Covid pandemic highlighting the Southern Trust had the single biggest number of Covid inpatients out of the 5 Trust areas as a result of Covid and had the highest levels of Covid positive within the community since beginning December. From a Covid perspective are now in a much better position as inpatient and community levels are now reducing therefore allowing the Trust to concentrate more on the rebuild plan which is coming to the Trust Board on Thursday 25 March 2021 should any members which to attend.

Members asked the following questions:

- Red flag referrals were not receiving responses for several months.
- Big impact on waiting lists, what was being done to resolve this.
- Why were Diabetic and Anti-Natal specialists not seeing patients face to face when other clinics were.
- Could an update be provided on the new Community Treatment Centre in Newry.
- What services were currently available for under 18's in relation to alcohol and drugs misuse and were they going back to face to face services.

The delegation responded to the queries as follows:

- Red flags had not all been able to be addressed during Covid due to clinicians working in Covid intensive care areas instead. There was a plan in place to try and address those along with waiting lists, all of the staff were now back in their own posts but there would still be a mismatch in the number of people who needed an appointment and the resources they had so there would continue to be waits.
- Each service did a risk assessment to establish if face to face clinics could take place safely, Mr S Devlin agreed he would come back to members with an update on Diabetic and Anti-Natal clinics.
- The new Community Treatment Centre in Newry is currently with the Health Minister to finally approve, once an update is received members will be advised.

- Mr S Devlin agreed to come back to members with a list of services available through Children's Services and CAMHS and confirmed face to face services would be resuming where possible.

The meeting concluded at 17.00pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Wednesday 07 April 2021.

Signed: Councillor L Devlin
Chairperson of Council

Signed: Ms M Ward
Chief Executive