

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMC/SC

Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 31 October 2022 at 3.00pm in Downshire Chamber and via Microsoft Teams

In the Chair: Councillor T Andrews **15.02PM – 15.15PM**
Councillor M Savage **15.15PM – 18.07PM**

In attendance in Chamber: (Councillors)
Councillor T Andrews
Councillor R Burgess
Councillor D Curran
Councillor A Lewis
Councillor Y Moore

In Attendance via Teams: Councillor P Byrne
Councillor M Larkin
Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor D McAteer
Councillor H Reilly
Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Trainor

In attendance in Chamber: (Officials)
Mr M Lipsett, Director Active and Healthy Communities
Mrs J Kelly, Director Corporate Services
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer

In Attendance via Teams: South Eastern Trust
Mrs R Coulter, Chief Executive
Ms H Moore, Director of Planning
Mr M Neill, Assistant Director for Unscheduled Care in Hospital
Services
Mrs M O’Kane, Director of Adult Services & Physical Health
Care
Mr D Brannigan, Assistant Director Mental Health Services

Northern Ireland Ambulance Service:
Mr M Cochrane, Assistant Director of Operations
Mr S Mullen, Head of Planning

Southern Trust
Dr Maria O’Kane, Chief Executive
Mrs L Leeman, Interim Director of Planning & Reform
Mrs T Reid, Director Surgery, CCS & IMWH

Mr B Beattie, Director of Adult Community Services
Mrs C Reid, Interim Director Medicine & Unscheduled Care
Dr Donal Duffy, Community Forum
Mr K Hughes, Pathfinder Group

SC/27/2021 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor Lewis that Councillor Andrews assume the Chair as Councillor Savage was running late.

Apologies were received from Councillors Devlin, Gallagher, Hanlon, Hanna, Magennis, McEvoy, McMurray, Owen, Reilly and Stokes and the Chief Executive.

SC/28/2021 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/29/2021 PRESENTATION FROM SOUTH EASTERN TRUST

The Chairperson welcomed Mrs R Coulter and the delegation from South Eastern Trust to the meeting and invited them to make their presentation.

Mrs Coulter provided an update to members on services and pressures faced across the South Eastern Trust outlining the vision 3 to 5 years down the line for services across hospital, community and primary care settings.

Members asked the following questions:

- Members thanked and commended Mrs Coulter and her team including doctors and nurses for the exemplary work they carry out.
- Was the future of the Downe Hospital secure and would there be assurances that no services or resources be cut to cover the £450 million overspend?
- Were there any plans to change the phone first opening times and was this continuously being reviewed?
- Safe staffing environment, payrise and mileage was a real issue for staff especially with the cost of living crisis, what was the Trust doing to support staff and unions to obtain a fair deal?
- Fantastic to see the efforts that the Trust were making in bringing additional Mental Health Services which were vital post-covid and going through the cost of living crisis.
- What was the impact of covid on the workforce and what areas had been affected the most?
- Was there an update on the Regional Trauma Network?
- The people in the Down area were expecting the Accident & Emergency Department to be reopened after covid, had the staff that had been redeployed during the pandemic been redeployed back to the Downe Hospital and if so were they currently all working within the Urgent Care and Phone First Departments?
- What pressures were the Trust finding in being able to get interest from care providers and allocating care packages? Would the Trust consider in expanding the service they provide to meet the needs and shortfall of care packages and what impact was this

having on Emergency Department, wards and general movement of patients through the system?

The delegation responded to queries as follows:

- Mrs Coulter welcomed the positive feedback for staff and would pass it on.
- The financial position would not affect the future of the Downe Hospital or its services as they were deemed essential and hoped would be strengthened going forward, the Department of Health would have to manage the financial burdens and make savings without having an impact on service provision. There were ongoing conversations with the Department of Finance and Westminster in relation to this.
- The Trust were very supportive of staff and aware of the conversations with unions, meetings were taking place with trade unions on a weekly basis to keep a close eye on the pressures and the impact of the mileage situation and paying of staff.
- Urgent Care Centre was provided from the Emergency Department in the Downe Hospital and was working very well. Phone First would be rolled out across Northern Ireland across the smaller units, it wouldn't work as well in very large acute departments as those patients are usually very acutely unwell needing urgent attention.
- All staff that were redeployed are all back in the Downe Hospital, keen to ensure all services there are sustainable and on developing other roles eg. Emergency Nurse Practitioner role in Down, Ards, Lagan Valley and Ulster Hospitals.
- Trust was keen to hold a public consultation exercise in relation to what the model should be going forward and what was possible in the Down area, when the time was right.
- Regional Trauma Network - A number of significant workshops had been held over the summer with various organisations to try and pull together shared experiences of what was best way to support those with lived experience of trauma and that point of access clearly understood and pathways clearly identified. There was no date as of yet regarding the launch but would be shared once confirmed.
- Domiciliary care model was struggling, Trust is doing everything they could to support domiciliary care providers, struggling to get enough workforce for the demand required. 20% of domiciliary care was provided by Trust, 80% provided outside by providers, working closely together, the more that could be done to support people to stay in their homes the better especially for elderly.
- This was the only part of UK where domiciliary care was free, the rate that paid to domiciliary care workforce does need adjusted, there were limited resources and going forward was it realistic to provide all of these services for free? Tough conversations were needed going forward, there are currently 6,500 hours unmet in South Eastern Trust.
- Encourage more public support in helping out elderly neighbours, technological advances had helped people be more independent in their own homes, Direct Payments and suitable housing stock are all ways to ease some of the pressures faced.

Mrs Coulter concluded by saying that the relationship and dialogue between the Trust and council was extremely important getting the public message out, appealing to members to support them in whatever way they could and to report any concerns directly.

SC/030/2022: RESPONSE FROM NORTHERN IRELAND AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation from Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and invited them to make their presentation.

Mr Cochrane thanked the Chairperson for the opportunity to attend the Special Council Meeting and apologised on behalf of Ms Byrne and Ms Maxwell who were not able to attend due to covid. Mr Cochrane and Mr Mullen then provided an overview on what services they provide, some of the challenges faced and plans going forward.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Lewis paid tribute to the Slieve Croob and all First Responder teams working across the council area, asking if this had eased any of the pressures?
- Members asked for an update on staffing recruitment campaign and staff shortages.
- What could Members do to help raise awareness with attacks on ambulance staff which had a knock-on effect putting people off applying for the role.

The delegation responded to queries as follows:

- There were currently 3 community First Responder schemes running in the District and welcomed any further interest in any additional schemes in the community to help.
- Hoped to focus more on health promotion/prevention, community education programmes that had been put on hold due to the pandemic asked members to encourage constituents to get involved.
- Biggest challenge faced at present is in ambulance handover's causing delays and impacting on service.
- Rolling recruitment continues, there are some vacancies however general staffing levels are pretty good.
- Anything members could do to highlight the issue and dispel the myth that it was ok to abuse and attack ambulance staff would be appreciated. The number of attacks were now 12 per week which was the worst it had ever been. Most recent initiative wearing body cameras had been rolled out across NIAS and support would be appreciated to highlight the positive impact this would have in preventing future attacks.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for their presentation and their team for the dedication and work that they did which is vital across the District.

SC/031/2022: RESPONSE FROM SOUTHERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation from Southern Trust and invited them to make their presentation.

Following a detailed overview from the delegation on some of the challenges currently faced with particular focus on access to services, service update, future working together and next steps, Members asked the following questions:

- The Chairperson highlighted a recent personal experience, stating he could not fault the care received, however travelling to Craigavon to have a dressing changed post-surgery needed reviewed as it was not a very comfortable journey for the patient and was something that could be done at Daisy Hill.
- Concerns were raised with a recent experience with an ambulatory referral which had a communication breakdown and perhaps the system needed reviewed.

- Members while welcoming the recent elective surgery developments, asked whether that would preclude the return of emergency surgery or was it a potential opportunity with having surgeons on site.
- There was a specific need to expedite the Diagnostic Suite so patients could be assessed locally and moved to where they would get the best treatment.
- Members asked for an update on the Primary Care Centre in relation to Newry.
- There were further opportunities to be had with Cross Border collaboration and through the Shared Island Unit.
- Was there an update on the Kilkeel out of hours service?

The delegation responded to queries as follows:

- The majority of dressings should be carried out in GP surgeries and people should not have to travel to Craigavon unless it was absolutely necessary, this was something that would be explored further so as to not inconvenience patients.
- A daily huddle took place to pick up on any issues in emergency surgery and hopefully the breakdown in communication would have been fed back to try improve the service going forward.
- A regional consultation would take place on the provision of elective and emergency surgery across Northern Ireland. However due to the absence of an assembly that had been further delayed, it was anticipated this would happen in the new year. It had been a challenge in recruiting surgeons with the level of skills required in Daisy Hill but advertising was ongoing.
- Talks had been ongoing with the Minister and Permanent Secretary with regards the low voltage cable at Daisy Hill site and this was now at an advanced stage and once the detail was agreed it would progress immediately.
- Happy to pursue any opportunity presented regarding Cross Border collaboration and Shared Island Unit within the rules and framework of Northern Ireland and the Assembly.
- The Primary Care Centre remained a committed scheme and was active on the 10 year capital plan, a refreshed strategic case had been submitted and was going through the various stages and queries.
- Kilkeel out of hours service continues to be closed on a temporary basis due to inability to recruit sufficient staff to man the whole of the GP out of hours service that supports the whole of the Trust area, happy to follow up with Councillor Reilly outside of the meeting.

In concluding Dr O’Kane stated that levels of attendance at Emergency Departments weren’t increasing due to new measures put in place to try and support people not to attend Emergency Departments, however the discharge flow was causing the huge backward pressure. Three times as many people had been delayed in hospitals in Daisy Hill and Craigavon than six months ago which was driving up the length of stay for patients and runs the risk of undoing a lot of good work if in hospital too long. Dr O’Kane appealed to members to encourage the wider public to take, in particular, older people home from hospital if given the opportunity as quickly as possible to reduce the risk and reduce some of the back pressure.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.07pm.

For adoption at Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to be held on Monday 5 December 2022.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive