



# Buckinghamshire Council

## Health & Adult Social Care Select Committee

### Minutes

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HEALTH & ADULT SOCIAL CARE SELECT COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER 2023 IN THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, GATEHOUSE ROAD, AYLESBURY HP19 8FF, COMMENCING AT 10.03 AM AND CONCLUDING AT 1.00 PM

#### MEMBERS PRESENT

J MacBean (Chairman), P Gomm, T Green, C Heap, H Mordue, S Morgan, C Poll, G Sandy, R Stuchbury, A Turner, N Thomas, M Walsh (Vice-Chairman), J Wassell, Z McIntosh and R Gaster

#### OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs E Wheaton, Cllr A Macpherson, Ms T Adonis-French, Mr M Begley, Mr R Bhasin, Ms T Ironmonger, Mr D Lutchmaya, Mr P Stevens, Dr M Thornton, Mrs S Moore, Ms P Baker and Ms E Crozier

#### Agenda Item

##### 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors S Adoh and C Jones.

Cllr R Caster substituted for Cllr Jones.

##### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Chris Poll declared an interest in items 6 & 7 as South Central Ambulance Service was a dormant client.

Cllr Alan Turner declared that he is a Trustee of the Princes Centre, an independent day care provider.

##### 3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record.

##### 4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

##### 5 CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Chairman updated the Committee on the following:

#### Autism Strategy

- A joint response had been sent from the committee and the Children's & Education Select Committee to the recent draft Autism Strategy public consultation. The Members on the working group, Cllrs Mordue, Stuchbury and Poll, were thanked for their time in preparing the response.
- Members would have an opportunity to hear how their feedback had helped shape the final strategy at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

#### **Joint Health Scrutiny Committee**

- Local authorities in Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes had set up a joint health overview and scrutiny committee to review the work of the BLMK Integrated Care System.
- Buckinghamshire Council had been allocated one seat on the joint committee
- The Chairman thanked Cllr Mordue for agreeing to take up the appointment to the joint committee.
- The first formal meeting would be taking place on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023

#### **Primary Healthcare Planning Rapid Review**

- Two days of evidence gathering had taken place as part of the Primary Healthcare Planning Rapid Review.
- The Chairman thanked the four Committee Members who were part of the rapid review – Cllrs Poll, Stuchbury, Thomas and Turner.
- The report was due to be discussed at the next Committee meeting in November.

## **6 SYSTEM WINTER PLAN**

The Chairman welcomed the following presenters to the meeting:

Caroline Capell, Director of Urgent and Emergency Care  
 Angela Macpherson, Cabinet Member, Health & Wellbeing  
 Tiffany Adonis-French, Service Director, ASC Operations  
 Tracey Ironmonger, Service Director, Integrated Commissioning  
 Raghuv Bhasin, Chief Operating Officer, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust (BHT)  
 Martin Thornton, Interim Deputy Director for Bucks GPPA and FedBucks Director  
 Mark Begley, Head of Operations, South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS)  
 Daryl Lutchmaya, Chief Governance Officer (SCAS)  
 Paul Stevens, Assistant Director, Commercial Services (SCAS)  
 Emma Crozier, Patient Transport Service Area Manager (SCAS)

During the discussion, the following key points were made and Members asked the following questions:

- The planning for winter 2024 to 2025 would start in February and would focus on same day care, increasing capacity, reducing discharge delays and demand caused by surges such as the increase in streptococcal A infections.
- Healthcare provision had improved since last winter and should be the first year "back to normal" after the Covid pandemic.
- In response to a question about improved dementia care, the Chief Operating Officer for BHT outlined two improvements. The first Admiral nurse had been recruited and it was hoped that another nurse would be recruited soon. There was also a better relationship with a small number of care homes who had formed a hub to provide dementia support.

This had resulted in patients staying in care for shorter periods of time whilst their care packages were established (reduced from an average of 85 to 35 days).

- The Chairman asked for more information on the effectiveness of these care hubs. The Service Director for Integrated Commissioning explained that, over the last year, joint working with care providers had been effective. There were five hubs providing 26 beds as well as 22 beds in the Olympic Lodge facility at Stoke Mandeville. The Service Director for ASC Operations said that the working model had been tested before the winter challenges started and that the multi-disciplinary approach was producing better outcomes for patients.
- A Member raised concerns about Buckinghamshire residents who were discharged from neighbouring hospitals, such as Milton Keynes and Wexham Park Hospitals, particularly when there were social care needs. The Service Director for ASC Operations explained that there was a dedicated team who were handling out of county hospital discharges.
- The Head of Operations highlighted that the South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) had a number of pathways available to them to ensure patients were treated at the right place and ambulance crews would do their best not to take patients to hospital. He went on to say that 50% of patients who called 999 did not go to hospital.
- A Member asked how Olympic Lodge would be staffed and the impact future industrial action would have on being able to staff this facility over the winter. The Chief Operating Officer advised that there would be a dedicated team of nursing staff and that the ward was nurse and therapy led and would not be adversely affected by any industrial action.
- In response to a Member question about the risks associated with covid variants leading to more hospital admissions, the Chief Operating Officer explained that there was additional capacity to help manage such an event although Covid outbreaks created additional pressure on space as the patient needed to be isolated.
- The Chairman asked if there was a mechanism to collect patient and carer feedback on the Care Home Hub. The Chief Operating Officer said that there had been a full evaluation of the Olympic Lodge facility from last time. The Chief Executive of Heathwatch Bucks added that there was a plan to review the patient and carer journey.
- In response to a Member question about the availability of covid booster and flu vaccinations, the interim Deputy Director of GPPA explained that capacity and financing were variable. In some places, patients could get both jabs. Home visits for housebound patients were available but provision was patchy as these are time-consuming. There was a 26.4% vaccine take-up in the BOB area as at 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023.
- In response to a question about sufficient capacity in the adult social care system, the Service Director for Integrated Commissioning explained that capacity was generally good but there were some areas where there were challenges.
- In response to Member questions about the winter vaccination programme, the interim Deputy Director for GPPA explained that vaccinations were being carried out in surgeries rather than large vaccination centres as there were no social distancing requirements now.
- A Member asked whether additional capacity had been put in place to deal with a spike in respiratory diseases over the winter, the Chief Operating Officer said that clinicians had good data to help manage demand over the winter months.
- In response to a question, on the challenges in primary care, the interim Deputy Director said that the Clinical Assessment Service (CAS) had been providing additional support, in terms of triaging patients which helped GP surgeries manage their increased demand.
- The Chairman asked about increased pressure on the 111 service. It was agreed by health partners that the performance of the service had improved.
- In response to a question from a Member on surge planning in emergency care, the Director of Urgent and Emergency Care explained that the Operational Pressures and Escalation Levels (OPEL) framework operates across the whole country, sharing useful data. The Chief Operating Officer added that the data allowed clinicians to plan for a surge in demand and to

predict peak demand.

- A Member spoke from personal experience about care and support for people with dementia and their carers when an emergency occurs. The Chief Operating Officer outlined the services available through the hub, which was based at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. The Member felt that the information about the services provided at the hub should be made available to Members and promoted more widely to the public.

**Action: Raghuv Bhasin**

- In response to a question about handover delays in hospital, the Head of Operations at SCAS said that paramedics had a number of pathways available to them and not all patients were taken to the Emergency Department. The Chief Operating Officer went on to say that there were now twelve A and E consultants compared to six last year.
- In response to a query on delayed patient discharge, the Service Director for ASC Operations explained that a new Transfer of Care Hub would be opening on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023 offering a range of options for patients which would assist in the discharge process.
- A Member asked for clarification about the performance tables on page 14 of the agenda pack and queried whether there were a lot of people returning to the safe haven scheme. The figures cover Stoke Mandeville Hospital and the Urgent Treatment Centre, where a combined number of 500 patients were seen each day. The Director of Urgent and Emergency Care explained that many of the repeat attendees to the safe haven scheme were planned.
- The Chairman asked that the winter figures should be reviewed as part of the evaluation of the winter plan item which would come to the Committee later next year.
- In response to a Member question about ensuring a rapid response to mental health issues, the Director of Urgent and Emergency Care said that there was a pathway for patients to contact Oxford Health. Oxford Health staff were also working in the 111/999 call centres.
- A Member asked how the Virtual Ward Bed scheme was working and if staffing levels were sufficient. The Chief Operating Officer said that there were currently 90 virtual ward beds and the aim was to provide virtual ward care to 160 patients. The two largest groups of patients being looked after were those with frailty or respiratory needs.
- In response to a Member question about staff wellbeing, the Chief Operating Officer explained that emotional and physical wellbeing support was provided to all staff.

The Chairman thanked all the contributors for their time and said that she looked forward to hearing how the plans for this winter hold up against the pressures over the coming months.

## **7 SOUTH CENTRAL AMBULANCE SERVICE - IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

The Chairman welcomed the following presenters to the meeting:

Daryl Lutchmaya, Chief Governance Officer  
Paul Stevens, Assistant Director Commercial Services  
Emma Crozier, Patient Transport Service Area Manager  
Mark Begley, Head of Operations

The following key points were made:

- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) report in 2022 identified 11 must-do and 20 should-do items for South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) to undertake.
- There was one must-do item remaining which was to implement an escalation and decision-making process at board level. This was planned for December 2023.
- The remaining should-do item was to consider ways of monitoring outcomes for patients who were not transferred to hospital to see if other pathways were working effectively.

- Staff wellbeing was being prioritised with 27 Freedom to Speak Up champions being appointed and winter wellness packs had been distributed to all staff. An improvement plan had been launched to help staff reach their own performance targets.

During the discussion, Members asked the following questions:

- A Member asked whether the service was responsible for ensuring that when vulnerable patients were discharged from hospital, an appropriate care package was in place. The Assistant Director replied that SCAS deals with transporting patients to the most appropriate place and they would return a patient to hospital if they felt that the patient would be unsafe in their home. Wraparound care was provided by a number of different health and care providers.
- A Member asked about reasons for the significant increase in safeguarding referrals to the Council and asked if the Oliver McGowan advocacy guidelines were being followed. The Chief Governance Officer stated that SCAS was encouraging staff to identify and raise safeguarding issues and that this could account for the increase.
- A Member asked about the situation on mandatory appraisals and training for staff, referring to the paper which states that training was below target levels. The Chief Governance Officer explained that the percentage of staff who had completed mandatory training had risen from 64% to 83%. He added that sometimes training had to be paused due to work pressures.
- The Chairman asked Philippa Baker, as Place Director for the Integrated Care Board (ICB), to update Members on funding. Philippa explained that the ICB worked very closely with SCAS, looking at services such as 999 and 111 but there was no specific update on funding for this meeting.
- A Member asked how patient safeguarding had been impacted after the recent failure of IT software. The Head of Operations explained that the SCAS software needed to be updated and there had been challenges when the Electronic Patient Records (EPR) system failed but it had not affected the safeguarding of patients. The Chief Governance Officer said that the Board was discussing how to prioritise its spend on updating IT systems.
- A Member asked about the whistleblowing procedures within SCAS and asked if openness and transparency had improved. The Chief Governance Officer explained that any allegations were dealt with by the Board. The Assistant Director of Commercial Services added that SCAS had fully embraced a freedom to speak up culture and had guardians and champions in place. Staff were encouraged to talk to a champion about any concerns.
- In response to a Member question about the impact of HS2 and other construction projects on ambulance response times, the Head of Operations pointed out that Buckinghamshire was a very rural county with few main arterial routes. HS2 was a problem in Wendover and the north of the county. The East-West rail route was also a challenge, in terms of traffic disruption. Roadworks and the installation of broadband cables also caused delays. All these caused problems for non-emergency transport services as well as 999 responses.
- The Chairman asked about the level of engagement between HS2, East/West rail and SCAS. The Head of Operations said that SCAS did receive information but there had been occasions when roads had been closed or temporary lights in place which the service did not know about.
- In response to a Member question about the level of engagement between SCAS, the Council's Streetworks and Highways Management team, the Head of Operations said that the control room received emails but was not notified of all road closures – some of which were the result of utility companies undertaking emergency work.
- The Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing stated that she chairs regular meetings with HS2 and East/West rail and had been reassured that information on road closures was

passed onto Blue light services. She agreed to raise this again at the next meeting.

**Action: Cllr Angela Macpherson and Chairman**

- A Member asked what the regime was for cleaning vehicles and the stations where they were kept. The Area Manager replied that vehicles were deep cleaned every 6 weeks. Each evening they were cleaned and marked as clean. In stations, compliance walkarounds were carried out. After the covid pandemic, a number of cleanliness requirements had been maintained. The Head of Operations added that there were spot checks on the company who carry out the deep cleaning.
- In response to a Member question on staffing levels, the Head of Operations pointed out that clinicians take five years to train and that there was a limited number of available candidates. The service had employed several paramedics from Australia who were able to work in the UK for three years. The team was working on recruitment and retention, promoting wellbeing and offering rota patterns which give a better work-life balance. The vacancy rate across Aylesbury was around 14%.
- In response to a Member question about reasons why staff were leaving the service, the Head of Operations said there were various factors, including career progression and personal reasons, such as moving closer to family. The Area Manager added that the Patient Transport Service currently had a 5% vacancy rate in Buckinghamshire.

The Chairman thanked the presenters for attending and responding to Member questions.

## **8 HEALTHWATCH UPDATE**

Zoe McIntosh took Members through the Healthwatch Bucks update in the agenda pack and said that one of the top issues was patient access to a GP. The update also looked at other areas of primary care, mainly community pharmacies.

## **9 WORK PROGRAMME**

Members discussed items for the next meeting and agreed the following:

- Primary Care Network Inquiry - 12 month recommendation monitoring;
- Director for Public Health Annual Report.

Evaluation of the Winter Plan and an update from Oxford Health around mental health services were raised as potential items to add to the work programme.

## **10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 10am