

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notes of the Primary Care Applications Working Party Meeting held in the New Hartley Room, First Floor, County Hall, Morpeth at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 15 November 2017

PRESENT

Councillor LJ Rickerby (In the Chair)

COUNCILLOR

Bridgett, S (by invitation)

Simpson, EM

OFFICERS

Allen, DP

Young, S (CCG)

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors SJ Dickinson (invitation), R Moore, K Nisbet and JG Watson.

2 Notes from Previous Meeting

The Notes of the Meeting held on 25 July 2017, having been circulated, were agreed as a correct record.

3 Current Engagement

3.1 The Rothbury Practice

- 3.1.1 Mr Young provided Members with an update on the application of The Rothbury Practice to move from their premises in Market Street, Rothbury to the Rothbury Community Hospital. He requested that the Working Party express a view on the application, which would then be taken into account by the Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group's Primary Care Commissioning Committee as the response of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The following points were noted during the presentation:

Background

This was a GP practice engagement with the patient list and stakeholders, not a further public consultation about inpatient beds at the Hospital.

The current patient list size was 5737 and the main site was located across 2 co-joined buildings (2&3 market place Rothbury). The Practice also provided services at Longframlington, Harbottle and Rothbury Community Hospital.

Reasons for the Move

While the building was in reasonable condition, minor works were needed. The building was too small for the practice needs, with insufficient space for storage, in particular records, and no room for expansion. The current layout (over 3 floors) was unsuitable for patients with mobility issues, the majority of treatment rooms being on higher floors, and there was no lift. As a result those patients had to wait to access appointments on the lower floors. Also, there was no car parking outside the surgery.

The building was Grade 2 listed, therefore very few changes could be made internally or externally. The lease for 2 Market Place (from the Duke of Northumberland) was due to expire on 25 Dec 2017. No negotiations had taken place to extend the lease while the application was progressed, therefore security of site tenure was a risk.

New location

The new location was a purpose-built reconfiguration on the ground floor, the new rooms being alongside the existing room used by the practice, and there would be 9 car parking spaces.

The lease would run until 2035, when the current lease with NHCFT expired. The works were currently being undertaken and were due for completion in time for the proposed relocation on 16 December 2017.

Patient engagement

A comprehensive engagement plan had been enacted in December 2015/January 2016, consisting of:

- letters to households
- posters in practice and hospital
- Practice website information with FAQs
- a comment slip had been provided
- drop in sessions (80 at first session, less at second) which had been broadly supportive but had raised accessibility issues, that is, walking up the hill)
- Patient Participation Group (PPG) meeting
- stakeholder briefings, with no negative feedback
- Healthwatch

- MP
- Local Medical Committee
- PPG
- Local Councillors
- Local Pharmacies
- Local GP Practices.

Engagement had effectively continued throughout this period as the consultation about the inpatient beds in the Hospital had progressed and the consultation document included a question about the GP move. Responses had ranged from very negative to very positive regarding how people felt about the relocation:

- very negative 5%
- negative 10%
- neither positive or negative 32%
- positive 27%
- very positive 27%.

A further letter was sent out to the patient list in October 2017 as some time had elapsed since the initial engagement. Of the 14 responses received the majority were positive, with 11 very positive/supporting, 2 with minor concerns and 1 with strong concerns.

The PPG had been involved in active and ongoing discussions with the practice, the last meeting held on 19 October attended by 8, who gave their overwhelming support to the move. The PPG were also doing all they could to support the practice in addressing some of the concerns about the move.

Benefits

The following were clear benefits of the move:

- fit for purpose environment with all services on the ground floor
- improved integration of patient care - closer working of all healthcare professionals
- effective use of existing NHS facilities
- clinically safe treatment rooms, in compliance with Health & Safety and infection control regulations
- tenancy assurance
- free dedicated parking arrangements
- time management efficiencies
- improved communication and collaboration with other healthcare professionals, community nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, paramedics, dietician etc.

Drawbacks

Some patients were concerned about the walk up the hill in the new site. A considerable effort had been made by the practice and the PPG to address this concern. They had engaged with “Get About” transport and “Upper Coquetdale Community Transport” to arrange volunteer drivers and walking volunteers etc. Clearly those who were so immobile as to be housebound would continue to receive home visits.

Some had expressed concern about the effect of local flooding.

Way Ahead

The proposed move date was 16 December 2017 and the CCG PCCC would consider the application on 22 November 2017.

3.1.2 Discussion

Members made the following comments arising from the presentation:

- a concern about flooding in the area was the risk that flood water would cut the site off from the rest of Rothbury
- accessing the site on foot was an issue, owing to damp ground along the uphill route past the footbridge by the river, the footbridge itself and, in particular, the car park
- the local Member considered that amenities nearby the site required improvements.

Members noted that the PCCC would take the Meeting’s comments into account when considering the application on 22 November 2017 and it was **RESOLVED** to:

- (1) support approval of the application as the appropriate way forward for the benefit of Rothbury
- (2) note the support of the local Member for the application.

3.2 Coquetdale Dental Practice

3.2.1 The Policy Officer provided Members with the following update on actions being taken to provide replacement service/s for patients of the Coquetdale Dental Practice:

On 10 October 2017, the Council had been informed by NHS England that the Coquetdale Dental Practice would close on 13 October 2017. This had been raised by a local Member at the Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting of 12 October 2017. The Board requested that NHS England be approached for an update and that Members be informed of their response.

NHSE had been contacted on 12 October 2017 and had provided the following information:

- NHSE had been working with Mr S Francis for two years attempting to secure continuity of service
- it was widely known that Mr Francis had been suffering from ill health for some time and had been struggling to run a single-handed practice over the two sites
- Mr Francis had sent out a consultation letter to his patients on 12 June 2017, proposing to close the practice at Broomhill Health Centre and to provide a service from Rothbury only. The consultation had been completed successfully but personal circumstances had prevented those plans being pursued and regretfully led to his decision to hand the contract back to NHSE
- NHSE had approached all practices in the surrounding areas and the five practices named in their 10 October 2017 letter to patients had the capacity between them to absorb Mr Francis' patients with the greatest capacity available at the Genix Healthcare practice in Alnwick. NHSE acknowledged that this would involve travel for many patients. Public transport was available from Rothbury and Hadston to Alnwick and Morpeth
- the NHSE Request For Information would include an invitation for a practitioner to provide a similar service, however the difficulties with recruiting to small dental practices in rural areas were well known
- NHSE would keep a tight timescale for this process and would ensure that the Committee was kept up to date as this progressed.

On 6 November 2017, the following additional update was received:

- since the closure of the Coquetdale Dental Practice on 13 October 2017 at both sites in Hadston and Rothbury, NHSE, HealthWatch and PALS had been directing patients to local providers who had indicated that they had capacity to provide services to some of the Coquetdale patient list, mainly in Alnwick and Morpeth
- NHSE had been monitoring patient experience and had found that an influx of patients had been seeking to register with new providers both for treatment required immediately and for the future. This had caused a slightly longer waiting time (around two weeks) for appointments in the short term
- to inform the procurement process, NHSE were preparing to publish a Request For Information (RFI) in the second half of November 2017, inviting offers from prospective service providers. While NHSE were proactively seeking opportunities to increase patient access and hoped to secure a service model that included local provision, a successful outcome would depend upon offers received

- HealthWatch Northumberland were working closely with NHSE, undertaking communications with patients regarding the process of transfers to other practices and dealing with any patient queries. They would report their findings to NHSE.

Copies of the NHSE letters to patients and the NCC Health & Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, both dated 10 October 2017, and the Coquetdale Dental Practice consultation letter of 12 June 2017 addressed to patients, were provided to Members.

3.2.2 Discussion

The following points were noted in discussion, during which Members took account of written comments submitted by the local Member for Druridge Bay, who had been unable to join the Meeting:

- transport was the main issue for patients travelling to alternative services. In the absence of local capacity, for example in Amble and Widdrington, it was difficult financially for many patients on low incomes, at around £7.00 per person for a return journey travelling to Alnwick or Morpeth. This also involved travelling time of over an hour
- it was suggested that provision of a dental service from the Rothbury Community Hospital would be beneficial for the area, also that reprovision in the Broomhill Health Centre would be appropriate in view of its recent refurbishment
- it was clear from the Report that there was a demand for services, and local provision would be the best solution in view of the transport issues.

Members noted that NHS England had indicated their willingness to reprovide a service similar to the one now discontinued, however this depended upon a suitable offer in response to the Request For Information (RFI) notice planned for publication later in November 2017. In the interim, NHSE would continue directing patients to appropriate alternative services and handling queries, with HealthWatch assistance.

Members considered that more detail about the available options for an alternative service were required before a considered response could be given to NHSE. It was suggested that arranging for a report from NHSE to the 16 January 2018 Meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee would provide time for progress to be made and would provide the Committee with an opportunity to offer a positive response.

It was **RESOLVED** to suggest that the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a Report from NHS England, preferably at the 16 January 2018 Meeting, providing Members with the opportunity to offer a useful and positive response.

4 Next Meeting

Meetings would continue to be arranged as and when business arose.

DPA/
2017-11-16