

HEALTH AND WELLBEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Notes of the Primary Care Applications Working Party meeting held in the Dunstanburgh Room, First Floor, County Hall, Morpeth at 10.30am on Friday, 24 January 2020

PRESENT

Councillor L Rickerby (Chair, in the Chair)

COUNCILLORS

Bowman, L (substitute)

Hutchinson, I (substitute)

OFFICERS

Angus, C

Long, R (CCG)

Bird, M

Phelps, P (CCG)

Elliott, D (CCG)

6. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nisbet and Watson.

Councillors Bowman and Hutchinson were attending as substitutes; a replacement for Councillor Moore would be sought at the next Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 4 February 2020.

7. Primary Care Application

The meeting had been arranged to consider a change in primary care arrangements for Riversdale Surgery, Wylam. The Working Party were being asked to provide their views on the proposal before a decision was taken by the CCG's (Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group) Primary Care Commissioning Committee.

The Working Party were advised that around 2016 - 2017, a GP who had part owned the premises proposed to relocate, but the other partner could remain at the Wylam site in the meantime. The practice was advised that they would need to engage with registered patients about any possible changes. The GP Practice was split between two sites, one in Wylam and one in Prudhoe, with around a 50/50 split in the numbers of registered patients who attended each location, which were 2.5 miles apart.

There was an opportunity to further develop the Oaklands Centre, which was the Prudhoe site, but progress had been slow to date. Healthwatch were aware of the proposal. However recently the doctor who had continued to practise at the Wylam site had decided to retire in May 2020, which would leave the practice with no premises from May, as the other partners wished to consolidate at the Prudhoe site.

Work had been undertaken but alternative location had been found in Wylam for the practice to remain. There would continue to be another GP Practice in Wylam however, the White Medical Group. Some local residents had expressed concerns about the amount of engagement undertaken and scoping of alternative locations, plus access to public transport. Neither the CCG or the practice had any control over local public transport but the frequency was not ideal. The CCG had met with the practice in late 2019 and asked them to undertake further engagement work. The proposal to consolidate in Prudhoe was just a change in site, and would have no impact on the level of service provision. An extra GP would be recruited; moving to a more modern premises would also help attract and sustain GPs.

An outline proposal from the practice had been presented to the Primary Care Commissioning Committee in August 2019. The CCG considered the proposal to be acceptable in principle but the practice would need to undertake more engagement work first. Not everybody raising concerns were actually members of the practice. The full results of the latest consultation would be available by 31 January and the Primary Care Commissioning Committee would take a decision in public at their next meeting on 12 February.

Questions/discussion

Members were advised that home visits would continue to be offered. The issue of concern was travel for Wylam residents to the Prudhoe site. Between 5,000 - 6,000 patients were registered, of which half attended each premises. 200 people had replied to the Healthwatch survey about the proposal. The White Medical Group had indicated that they had the capacity to take on additional patients from Riversdale if people did not want to travel to Prudhoe.

In response to a question, members were advised that there was not the space for Riversdale to have a satellite hub at the White Medical Group premises. A member added that this could dilute the service provision anyway, and the quality of care was the most important issue.

A member added that Wylam was a rural area and residents in such areas needed to travel to visit their GP. He could not see an alternative, and the safety of patients was the paramount consideration.

Members were informed that the CCG would be able to assess the numbers of car owners in the vicinity, so they would have an indication of people's

ability to travel.

A member referred to the importance of public transport especially as some people might not be able to drive due to their ill health. The current building in Wylam was close to the Main Street but had no parking available.

The Chair then added that usually the local member was invited to these meetings. Councillor Quinn had been asked but had a prior engagement. She instead emailed a response, which was read out at the meeting:

I have been aware of the proposed move of the Practice to Prudhoe since I was elected in May 2017 and have met with Partners and the GP as well as the White Medical Group (Wylam's other Practice) during that time, as well as spoken to many residents on this issue.

I accept that in a perfect world the Practice would remain where it is, but I also accept that after 35 years of dedicated service the GP is entitled to retire and sell the building that he owns. As such a move seems inevitable.

Various suggestions have been made about moving elsewhere in the village - the Falcon Centre, old Post Office etc. These do not seem to be viable options for a multitude of reasons - infection control, security, GDPR, access etc - and the move to Prudhoe seems the most likely option. I met the GP on Monday and stressed that my major concern was that disruption to his patients is kept to a minimum - transport, dispensing etc - and I am confident that that is his major concern too.

To reiterate, I would love the Practice to remain in Wylam but that seems highly unlikely as the GP retires in April. I would like bus routes to be looked at to ensure that patients without transport can still access services, and to ensure that any disruption to patients is kept to a minimum. I am confident that this is the priority of the Riversdale doctors too.

Members agreed that this was a good summary of the current position. In response to another question, members were advised that waiting times at Riversdale were good; patients were usually seen either the day or the day after they requested an appointment. Members were further advised that the CCG would be presenting an item about their primary care strategy, covering challenges currently faced, to the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 4 February 2020.

Members agreed that the changes were unfortunate regarding transport and appreciated problems highlighted by some residents, but agreed that to ensure the continued provision of services, the proposal was the only option available.

RESOLVED that the Working Party's views be reported to the Primary Care Commissioning Committee.

8. Next Meeting

Additional meetings would continue to be arranged as and when required, although Democratic Services would be considering options for provisional dates in case they were needed to take place before meetings of the Primary Care Commissioning Committee.

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