

Joint Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committees for Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford



Date of meetings: 11 December 2008

Subject: Joint PCT Scrutiny in West Essex

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Committee Secretary: Adrian Hendry

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Committee consider its participation in a pilot joint scrutiny arrangement for West Essex PCT on the following basis:**
 - (i) the Council having an equal stake in the membership of the group;**
 - (ii) the topic and objectives of any scrutiny being agreed by all three district council's and the PCT;**
 - (iii) the Essex HOSC being informed of the proposed scrutiny, scoping document and objectives of any review;**
- (2) That, subject to recommendation (1) above:**
 - (i) the Committee put forward ideas for areas of review to be considered further by the Joint Group; and**
 - (ii) the Committee appoint three members to the Group.**

Report:

1. Following a review West Essex PCT was created covering the local government administrative areas covered by Uttlesford, Harlow and Epping Forest by combining PCT's previously based on solely district boundaries. The Districts have managed to maintain their strong links with the PCT and from time to time, PCT representatives attend Overview and Scrutiny meetings to discuss matters of both local and strategic interest.
2. At a County level the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) have the statutory duty for health scrutiny. The work of the HOSC tends however to have a wider strategic remit across Essex rather than having a specific focus on west Essex. Recently HOSC has set up a Task and Finish Review which proposes review the way in which the West Essex PCT plans for and commissions services to meet projected changes in demands and the impact of reconfiguration or change in provision. Its thrust is to look at the strategic commissioning of primary care services, particularly in light of housing growth, development and capacity to ensure robust plans and infrastructure are in place. The full scoping document for the review is attached as Appendix 1.
3. Harlow members have expressed an interest in undertaking a piece of health scrutiny jointly with Uttlesford and Epping Forest on a service level basis. As an example, the recent PCT report into their proposed Strategy for Healthcare for 2008-2012 indicates that people in West Essex suffer from poor access to services including health care, compared to most areas of the country, particularly in Epping Forest and Uttlesford. Additionally, the area is

affluent but there are deprived communities which can adversely affect health and quality of life, this is particularly true for parts of Harlow, Waltham Abbey, Shelley (near Ongar) and Debden. The population age profile also indicates a higher than national average figure.

4. Officers and members from the three authorities have recently met together to discuss how such a review might take place. The issues for such a joint group are:

(i) how to ensure that the participation of the PCT in a worthwhile review can be secured and be mutually beneficial;

(ii) making sure that any review does not duplicate either work undertaken by or on behalf of HOSC;

(iii) that the structure does not eventually fall foul of any changes envisaged by the government on joint scrutiny committees following recent consultation which are scheduled for April 2009; and

(iv) that there is capacity to complete the review within a reasonable timeframe.

5. It was agreed by those that met that this report should be made to each of the three authorities to confirm that they would wish to pursue the joint group idea and seek ideas for topics for the review and appoint members to attend meetings on the basis of an equal share of members. Ideally topics suggested for the review should be relevant to all three districts. To give a favour, the Healthcare Strategy is also attached at Appendix 2 which outlines health issues facing the PCT.

6. A further meeting of the authorities will be held early in the new year to discuss the topics and method of review with the PCT. A scoping document will be produced and sent to Essex HOSC to ensure that they are aware of the proposed review.