

**Birmingham City Council and Sandwell Metropolitan
Borough Council**

Minutes of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**30 November, 2017 at 2.00 pm
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor E M Giles (Chair);
Councillors S Downing, B Lloyd and F Shaeen
(Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council).

Councillors D Alden, S Anderson, F Cotton and K
Hartley (Birmingham City Council).

Apologies: Councillors Z Ahmed (Sandwell) and J Francis
(Birmingham City Council).

In Attendance: C O'Connell – Regional Director Specialised
Commissioning, NHS England
G Lineham – Clinical Director Specialised
Commissioning, NHS England
J Kinghorn – Head of Communications and
Engagement Specialised Commissioning, NHS
England
A Williams - Accountable Officer Sandwell and
West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group
S Hancock – University Hospitals Birmingham
J Spencer – Healthwatch Birmingham
W Hodgetts – Healthwatch Sandwell

18/17 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 28th
September, 2017 be approved as a correct record.

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19/17 Oncology Services in Sandwell and West Birmingham

Further to Minute No. 14/17 (28th September, 2017) representatives from NHS England attended to inform the Committee of the background and circumstances around the temporary relocation of oncology services from Sandwell and City hospitals to the Queen Elizabeth and New Cross hospitals.

Solid Tumour oncology services had been commissioned from Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals (SWBH), who had a Service Level Agreement with University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) for their medical staffing to provide services at Sandwell and City hospitals. In 2015, UHB had given notice to SWBH that they would be unable to continue to support the service. Since this time NHS England had been working to ensure that the service could remain at Sandwell and City hospitals, however it had not been possible and UHB had given final notice in April 2017. The service had continued on a rolling contract basis until an emergency Quality Summit in October 2017 had concluded that an urgent, temporary re-location of the service was required, pending a wider review of cancer services across Birmingham and the Black Country.

The Committee noted that the only change to the patient pathway was that those receiving chemotherapy would have to travel to Queen Elizabeth or New Cross hospital for their treatment, depending on their preferred choice. This meant that patients' travel time would be longer and options for support with transport were therefore being explored.

Consultation on the change had not been possible due only six months final notice being given. However, extensive and significant consultation would take place on the wider review of cancer services.

From the discussion, questions and contributions of those present, the following issues were highlighted:-

- Patients did not generally care which organisation provided their care.

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- Members opined that reliance on a single provider was short-sighted and questioned the commissioning skills of NHS England.
- Members expressed concern that if there had been no satisfactory resolution in relation to one service in over two years, why should they have faith that a satisfactory resolution would be found in 12 months?
- NHS England was satisfied that it was acting within the law and was not required to consult on this temporary change.
- Parking at Queen Elizabeth Hospital was already in high demand and chemotherapy patients would almost certainly require spaces for themselves or companions as members felt that it was wholly unacceptable to expect them to use public transport.
- There was concern that the temporary change would become permanent, however UHB had been clear that it did not wish to deliver the service beyond the completion of the wider 12 month review.
- There were differences amongst UHB staff and SWBH staff about technical service specifications and what best practice looked like, which had contributed to the present situation.
- The situation was not about resources and could not be addressed by increasing funding or staffing levels.
- An added consequence of the changes was that it would impact on the viability of the two blood based oncology services in Sandwell and West Birmingham.

The Committee was extremely dissatisfied that no consultation had taken place about the changes and that such an unavoidable situation had been reached. The Committee stated that it would be closely monitoring the situation and would not hesitate to use the powers conferred to it under the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 should it become necessary. NHS England acknowledged that the situation was regrettable and assured the Committee that their preference had always, and would continue to be, that services were provided locally. The Committee was assured that there would be a wide an extensive public and patient engagement exercise as part of the wider review of cancer services.

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Members also expressed disappointment that the Chief Executive of Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust had not advised the committee of the future changes to gynaecology services.

Resolved:-

- (1) that an update on the review of cancer services across Sandwell and West Birmingham be provided to the Committee on 25th January 2018;
- (2) that, representatives of Sandwell and Birmingham Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and University Hospitals Birmingham be requested to attend the meeting on 25th January, 2018.

(Meeting ended at 3.57 pm)

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