

Minutes of the Meeting of the HEALTH LIAISON PANEL held at the Council Chamber, Epsom Town Hall on 5 July 2022

PRESENT -

Councillor Christine Cleveland (Chair); Councillors Liz Frost, Graham Jones, Peter Webb and Kate Chinn (as nominated substitute for Councillor Debbie Monksfield)

In Attendance: Melanie Bussicott (Head of Community Support Services, Elmbridge Borough Council), Rachel O'Reilly (Executive Head of Service (Communities), Mole Valley District Council) and Councillor Rachel Turner (Health Champion, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council)

Absent: Councillors Bernice Froud, Debbie Monksfield and Chris Webb

Officers present: Rachel Kundasamy (Health and Wellbeing Officer) and Serena Powis (Community and Voluntary Sector Liaison Officer)

1 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Health Liaison Panel held on 8 March 2022 were reviewed by the Panel. The Panel agreed that they were a true record and authorised the Chair to sign them.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in respect of items on the agenda.

3 THE FUTURE OF PRIMARY CARE WITHIN EPSOM & EWELL PRIMARY CARE NETWORK

The Chair welcomed the visitors and invited Rachel Graville (RG) to take the floor.

RG noted that Epsom Primary Care (EPC) have been working collaboratively and are currently in year four of a five-year contract. She discussed new developments, including bringing the GPs together to work more collaboratively. A series of presentations was given showing demographics of the area and how 60,000 patients are served by 7 GP practices and the Clinical Pharmacists inside each practice. RG presented a series of slides providing information on the "extra visits" EPC have undertaken. RG updated the panel on the news that a new post of Menopause Specialist has been created.

The Chair welcomed Helen Harwood (HH) to take the floor. Operations Manager for GP Health Partners Ltd (GPHP Ltd)

HH provided an explanation on the “Pro-Active Care – Community Focused” slide presentation. HH explained GPHP Ltd are working on a multitude of projects, including a Digital Library to help with signposting for their services. HH confirmed GPHP Ltd will launch the “Court Ward Project” on the 19 July 2022. Dr Clare Fuller – Chief Executive of Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care System – has been asked to lead on a wide-ranging national stocktake on how systems work with primary care and others to improve the integration of patient care. “Transforming our ICS (Integrated Care Systems) through the “Critical Five” is how primary care can be best supported within the emergent integrated care system (ICS) to meet the health needs of people in their local areas”.

HH went on to talk about GP Health Partners Limited (GPHP Ltd), and explained it is a company that is owned by 18 GP Practices in the Epsom locality. They are a “Not for Profit” organisation and look after 175,000 patients within the area. The funding for this current arrangement ends on 30 September 2022.

HH explained that Core Services have been extended to cover the extra time from 6.30 to 9.30pm, seven days a week at the Derby Medical Centre.

The Chair opened the floor for questions.

A Councillor asked what information is available on Court Ward as it shows up as an area of high need on the Surrey County Council (SCC) index of higher need. RG explained that all the feedback from Court Ward has not yet been received.

The Councillor enquired about the Epsom and Ewell Veterans Hub. They noted that it is funded by Surrey County Council, but the funding is due to end this summer. The Councillor asked if GPHP Ltd could look at supporting this project. RG said that R&BBC would be keen to get involved. HH agreed to share her presentation materials and veteran-specific literature with the Councillor. RG said that R&BBC are having a Community Day in September 2022 and that the veterans might be encouraged to come. A Councillor said that Communication is key and suggested that the local Residents Associations might be able to do promotion through their quarterly magazines. A Councillor suggested that more also ought to be done in the Reigate and Banstead Borough Veterans Hub.

A Councillor stated that residents in the North of the Reigate and Banstead Borough are struggling to get hospital appointments. The Councillor enquired as to why residents are having difficulty in getting appointments by phone, mentioning that turning up without an appointment is not an option for them. HH explained that staff are dealing with immense workloads. She highlighted the importance of educating people to only request appointments when the matter is of a serious nature. This is causing an increased demand resulting in a 5 week wait for an appointment. HH explained that there are other avenues outside of seeing a GP – people can get advice from Paramedics and Pharmacists.

4 EPSOM AND ST HELIER UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

The Chair invited the next guest speaker to take the floor.

James Blythe (Managing Director, Epsom, and St. Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust) (JB) introduced himself to the Panel.

JB provided a presentation on the current statistics, showing that 554 patients have been seen, of which 59 have been admitted, plus there are still people in hospital from previous admissions. Comparing these statistics to 2019 – it shows a 30% increase in demand, but performance is good when compared to National Statistics. Cancer patients are treated in the 62-day timescale, which is meeting the national requirement. 100 patients with Covid are currently being treated, but the current strain does not appear to be making people badly ill.

The presentation also covered the following:

Financial outlook: Currently 13% of the Trusts posts are vacant. 5% are off on sick leave – this is a high sickness rate. The Trust is currently working on a new culture for staff which looks at providing more support.

New Hospital update: The new hospital will not be ready until 2027.

Work to date: The Link Bridge has been completed.

The New Epsom & Ewell Community Hospital (NEECH) and The Poplars: Both currently located at West Park Hospital can move to the Epsom General Hospital site.

The Chair invited the next guest speaker to take the floor.

Ralph Mitchell – Director of Strategy, St Georges, Epsom, and St Helier University Hospitals Group (GESH) (RM) introduced himself to the Panel.

RM explained that new legislation will be coming in making the hospital strategy involve much more collaboration with GP's and other hospitals.

The Chair opened the floor for questions.

Following a question from a Councillor, JB said that the increase in mental health cases and the number of challenges has increased due to the pandemic, along with other factors. JB acknowledged the importance of working with Councillors, Epsom & Ewell, Reigate & Banstead and Elmbridge Councils, the GPs, and the hospitals.

A Councillors enquired about long waiting times in A&E. JB said that he is aware of the long waiting times experienced by patients and noted that the average waiting time is four hours. He stated that the queue is regularly prioritised every six to eight hours. He explained that it is a small department and those with greater needs are given priority over others. JB explained that there are multiple areas of consideration within A&E – ambulance admissions, handover for SE AS crew, etc. JB meets with his team every morning to discuss it and the Board are constantly balancing the risks.

A Councillor made an enquiry in relation to staffing vacancies. JB explained they have always dealt with challenges surrounding staff vacancies as they are competing for applicants in a particularly challenging market. They shall continue to encourage people to apply, with the main thrust being that Epsom is an extremely attractive place to work.

A Councillor asked for information regarding the new Acute Centre? JB explained that it must be built to a certain size and standard. Single rooms are much more intensive to nurse, but the Government is committed to this as a standard.

Another Councillor asked a question about the 3 hospitals (St. Georges, St. Hellier and Epsom) with regard to how people move between the sites. RM explained there will be shuttle services between the sites which will be open to patients as a part of the travel plan. He stated that operations are becoming a lot more centralised between St. Georges, St. Hellier and Epsom.

A Councillor asked about the long waiting time at Epsom General Hospital Pharmacy. They pressed that the parking charges that are accrued whilst waiting for a prescription are unaffordable. JB understood the frustration and suggested that the Pharmacy could ask people to come back at a prearranged time. He said he will note the feedback and see if anything can be done.

The meeting began at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.40 pm

COUNCILLOR CHRISTINE CLEVELAND (CHAIR)