

Minutes of the meeting of the Health, Housing & Adults Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 22 October 2024 at 19:00.

Present: Councillor Long (Chair)

Councillors Andrew, Banks, N Khan, Legg, Oguntola, Oyakhire, Smith and Verma

Apologies: Councillors Priestley, Whitworth and Ms T Keech

Also Present: 4 members of the public

Officers: R Tidman (Committee Services Manager), S Lloyd (Senior Governance and Scrutiny Officer), M Carr (Deputy Director of Public Health), V Collins (Director - Adult Services), A Griffiths (Assistant Director - Housing and Support) and L MacDonnell (Assistant Director - Adult Social Care)

HHAS12 Welcome and Introductions

Councillor Long welcomed attendees to the meeting.

HHAS13 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Priestley and Whitworth and Ms T Keech.

HHAS14 Disclosures of Interest

Councillor Banks declared for transparency that he had a health innovation contract with Milton Keynes University Hospital.

HHAS15 Minutes

Members of the Committee raised that discussions held at the last meeting in relation to the Development of an Integrated Behaviour Change Service item had not been fully captured in the draft minutes and requested the addition of a further point of discussion as follows:

“Members of the Committee noted that as no business case, evidence of other areas having success, costs involved or even where current success rates stand were presented it was difficult to scrutinise how this project would be successful.”

RESOLVED -

That, subject to the inclusion of the agreed amendment, the Minutes of the meeting of the Health, Housing and Adults Scrutiny Committee held on 4 September 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

HHAS16 Recommendations / Action Tracker

Members of the Committee noted that the majority of Recommendations/Actions included on the tracker were marked as pending and requested further information in relation to when this information was likely to be provided to the Committee.

RESOLVED –

1. That the updated Recommendations/Actions be received and noted.
2. That due dates be added to the pending items on the Recommendations/Action Tracker.

HHAS17 Waiting Times at Milton Keynes University Hospital

The Chief Executive Officer of Milton Keynes University Hospital (MKUH) introduced the item, highlighting the particular pressures in cancer treatment and urgent referrals which had significantly increased since the pandemic. He highlighted that MKUH had taken steps to try keep pace with demand, increase capacity and improve patient experience including use of private care, the introduction of a new theatre and the creation of new diagnostic treatment centres at Lloyds Court and Whitehouse Health Centre. The Chief Executive of MKUH concluded by noting that whilst significant improvements had been made the hospital still had ambitions to improve further and would continue to pursue development opportunities.

In response to questions from Members of the Committee the Chief Executive of MKUH advised that as a University Hospital one priority was to train, recruit and retain talented staff members to continue to ensure that staffing levels do not have a negative impact on capacity within the system. He added that the strong partnership relationships in Milton Keynes between the hospital and the council were paramount to ensuring that hospital discharge was not unduly delayed and praised the integrated discharge team based at the hospital for their work in this area.

Members of the Committee also raised the impact of missed appointments and the costs of referring patients to private providers for treatment. The Chief Executive of MKUH commented that use of the NHS App had allowed the hospital to halve the number of missed appointments and that costs of private healthcare were expected to rise which would have an impact.

RESOLVED –

1. That the presentation on waiting times be noted.
2. That the Planning Group consider including an item on the use of advanced technologies in health and care and the NHS Digital Strategy on the Committee's Work Programme.

HHAS18 Oral Health and Dental Access

The Deputy Director of Public Health introduced the item on oral health and dental access and outlined the responsibilities of Public Health and the Integrated Care

Board in this area. She highlighted the outcomes and recommendations of the Oral Health Needs Assessment and that, based on the dataset available, oral health in 5 year olds living in Milton Keynes was better than the national average.

The Senior Primary Care Dental Contracts & Development Manager from the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care Board (BLMK ICB) added that the key issue in this area was the recruitment and retention of NHS dentists. He highlighted initiatives being employed by BLMK ICB to assist with this including higher rates of pay per treatment and golden hellos of £20,000 across three years for new NHS dentists at specific practices, as well as encouraging upskilling of dental therapists and nurses.

Members of the Committee raised questions about the scale of the issue in Milton Keynes, asking for data on exactly how many residents were struggling to access an NHS dentist and whether there were differences in the different wards of the City. The Senior Primary Care Dental Contracts & Development Manager responded that as patients did not have to register at a dental practice in the same way as they would at a GP this data was not readily accessible and the ICB was working to improve the collation and interpretation of data in relation to dental access.

Members of the Committee again emphasised their desire to see more data which would allow for a more targeted approach within particular communities in which there were higher instances of poor oral health or more difficulty in accessing dental services. The Deputy Director of Public Health advised of interventions such as provision of free toothpaste and toothbrushes in Family Centres and leaflets in various languages to ensure that the information is accessible to as many residents as possible.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Committee notes the findings of the Oral Health Needs Assessment of Children and Young People and the actions being taken to increase dental access.
2. That the Committee receives data on oral health improvement activity and the regional dental access review in order to better understand the scale of the problem.
3. That further results from national dental surveys be provided to the Planning Group annually to consider further scrutiny on this issue as necessary.
4. That the Committee note the multitude of factors impacting oral health and the importance of preventative works to ensure good oral health in children.

HHAS19 Allocations Scheme - Consultation on Draft

The Assistant Director of Housing and Support took the Committee through the proposed Allocations Scheme, highlighting that it was a statutory requirement for the council to have such a scheme and it had last been approved in 2022. She advised that the draft scheme was out for consultation until 2 December 2024 and there was already a timetable of consultation plans with key stakeholders which

was provided to the Committee. The Assistant Director outlined the key changes between the proposed and current scheme and the challenges in the provision of social housing in Milton Keynes.

A member of the public attended the meeting to ask a question in relation to the exemption to local connection rules for victims of domestic abuse which had been removed in the draft Allocations Scheme. The Assistant Director responded that survivors of domestic abuse were still given preference in the proposed scheme and under Part 7 of the Housing Act victims of domestic abuse can present at any local authority and will have an automatic priority need for homelessness assistance. The member of the public asked a supplementary question about what access to the social housing register a victim of domestic abuse would have following the provision of safe accommodation under the homelessness duty. The Assistant Director responded that, had they held a social housing tenancy in the area from which they had fled, the council would pursue a reciprocal arrangement with that local authority. She added, if this were not the case, that they would then have to wait the proposed four years to join the register as they would have no additional rights to a lifetime secure tenancy.

Members of the Committee raised questions about social housing with S106 arrangements which stipulated the need for residents to have local connections, the exclusion of homeowners from applying to join the register and the income thresholds outlined in the proposed allocations scheme. The Assistant Director responded that there was a robust system in place to ensure that s106 agreements were complied with and that the scheme did reserve the right to consider exceptional circumstances in which homeowners would be allowed to join the register if their house was in a considerable amount of disrepair for example. She advised that the income thresholds were benchmarked against other local authorities and reviewed on an annual basis.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee:

1. note the need to prioritise urgent need for rehousing and homelessness applications.
2. support the content of the Draft Allocations Scheme.
3. endorse the proposals in relation to disabled persons.
4. support the benchmarking and annual review of the income thresholds contained within the Allocations Scheme.
5. welcome the flexibility to consider exceptional circumstances contained in the Scheme.
6. thank the team for their hard work in continuing to ensure that residents are supported with their housing needs.

HHAS20 2024/25 Work Programme

The Committee noted the content of the Work Programme for the rest of the municipal year. The Chair advised that, should any members of the Committee have further items they wished to submit for consideration, the Planning Group would discuss these at their next meeting.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee note the contents of the Work Programme.

HHAS21 Information Items

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to two reports submitted by the ICB for information only and recommended that any questions on the content were directed to the Senior Governance and Scrutiny Officer in the first instance.