



News Release

Health chief quizzed on future of maternity services

One of the county's most senior health chiefs has been quizzed over the future of maternity services in East Sussex.

Nick Yeo, chief executive of East Sussex Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), was called to account over the uncertainty which has followed the recent announcement that 24-hour obstetrics care will be lost at either the Eastbourne District General Hospital or the Conquest in Hastings.

Mr Yeo told the influential East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) that East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust, which is responsible for delivering the service on behalf of the PCTs, had voiced concerns about the sustainability of the service.

But he said that there are still no firm proposals about the future of obstetrics and that when there 'eventually' were, the views of the public would be sought.

Consultation will also take account of the views of clinicians, Mr Yeo said, and the final decision would have to be the 'best fit'. But he added that it is 'highly unlikely' that any decision will have universal support.

Following the meeting, HOSC chairman Cllr Bob Lacey said: "Uncertainty about the future of this important service has led to a lack of confidence among the general public that it will continue to be delivered to a high standard. If either Hastings or Eastbourne is to lose the service, we need to know when and what arrangements will be made to cater for expectant mothers throughout East Sussex.

"It has been very useful to put the concerns of the public to Mr Yeo and to seek assurances that they will be included in any future decision-making."

The committee demanded that the NHS work to restore the public's confidence in the health service following the damage caused by public statements on the single siting of obstetrics from the Medical Director of East Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust.

Ends



The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is managed by East Sussex County Council and works in partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council, Hastings Borough Council, Lewes District Council, Rother District Council and Wealden District Council.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

HOSC:

East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) was set up, in October 2003, by East Sussex County Council in response to Government aims to get people more involved in health decision-making and improving local health services. The committee includes members from every district and borough in the county - Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden – and representatives from the voluntary sector.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee last met on November....

For more information on HOSC see the website at www.eastsussexhealth.org

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