



Health Scrutiny in East Sussex Newsletter 001 – August 03

Introduction

This newsletter provides an update on the progress made with developing the new health scrutiny arrangements in East Sussex.

In April 2003, the County Council agreed to establish a health overview and scrutiny committee, in line with the Local Government Act 2000. It has now put in place the appropriate arrangements to enable this new power to be carried out.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Membership

Twelve elected members comprise the core group, seven from East Sussex County Council and one from each District and Borough Council. There will also be two representatives from the County's voluntary organisations acting in an advisory and information capacity. The representatives are currently being elected by the Countywide Voluntary Agencies Group. Patient and Public Involvement Forum representation will be decided when these bodies are established later this year.

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Bill Bentley, Chairman,
East Sussex CC
Cllr Ron Dyason, East Sussex CC
Cllr Mrs Joanne Gadd, Rother DC
Cllr Beryl Healy, East Sussex CC
Cllr Bert Leggett, Eastbourne BC
Cllr Mrs Ann Leigh, East Sussex CC
Cllr John Webber, Lewes DC
Cllr Mrs Diane Phillips, Wealden DC
Cllr David Rogers, East Sussex CC
Cllr Ronald Rushbrook, Hastings BC
Cllr Phil Scott, East Sussex CC
Cllr Mrs Joy Waite, Vice Chairman,
East Sussex CC

Legal advisor: Richard Partridge
Committee Secretary: Michaela Frost
Lead Officer: Roger Howarth.

The first public meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be at 10am on Wednesday 1 October 2003 in Room 4, Pelham House, Lewes.

Training programme

The committee members are currently involved in a programme of induction seminars. These are aimed at familiarisation with the workings of the NHS and to ensure familiarity with the likely health issues and matters which will be encountered in the future.

The elements of the induction seminars are outlined below:

- *Health and Health Agencies in East Sussex – provided by Audit Commission Health Specialists*
- *The work of East Sussex voluntary organisations in delivering and supporting health improvement – provided by representatives of the voluntary organisations.*
- *The work of NHS bodies in East Sussex – planned and delivered by NHS Trusts and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). This session includes the Clinical Services Review.*

There will be separate sessions from the Brighton & Hove based PCTs and NHS Trusts and Sussex Ambulance Services Trust.

- *Strategic Health Authority.*

Throughout June and July, Councillor Bentley and Roger Howarth completed a round of visits to meet senior colleagues, including the Chief Executive and Chairman of each of the PCTs and NHS Trusts. The Chief Executive and Chairman of each of the Community Health Councils were also visited. These visits have been helpful in explaining and developing the new relationship which is being fostered between the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the NHS Trusts and PCTs.

There will be a separate seminar on the health scrutiny arrangements and its work programme designed for all County Council and District and Borough members and officers on Wednesday 19 November 2003 in Lewes.

Developing a work programme

One of the first requirements of the new committee at its meeting on 1 October will be to establish a work programme for the first year to eighteen months. Preparatory work is underway to develop a shortlist of themes and topics for consideration. There are currently a number of agreements in the county on what health inequalities exist. Local Strategic Partnerships are one such source of agreed health issues being tackled locally. There are also many other health matters which are emerging as potential topics for scrutiny.

The work of NHS bodies and PCTs, in respect of significant changes to services, will be an area on which the committee will be consulted. Currently, the Lead Officer is in discussion with two PCTs on potential developments to services and the role of the new committee as a necessary body in the consultation process.

By 1 October, the committee will have a list of potential themes for scrutiny, together with an indication of matters to be referred to it from NHS bodies. The priorities from this list will be decided by the committee members and the committee is likely to undertake 3 to 4 scrutiny activities in any one year.

In the coming year, it is likely that the East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will need to join forces with the Brighton & Hove City and West Sussex health scrutiny committees to establish a joint scrutiny committee. In the future,

similar arrangements might also need to be made with Kent and Surrey.

This joint activity will be necessary where there is any review of services provided by an NHS body which serves people in more than one area. Discussions are taking place between the authorities, following guidance from central government on how this would work and be effective.

Communications

Some of the vital elements in the success of this new scrutiny role include the way in which the public understand its function and the way NHS bodies, in particular, value its contribution to the health improvement agenda. We are working with our public relations specialist to ensure that words like 'overview and 'scrutiny' are translated into words that have meaning for the public. The challenge is in finding clear ways of explaining what the committee will do.

Similarly, we are addressing the misconception that this new health scrutiny committee is a place for the public to direct its complaints, and that it will mirror the activities of the Community Health Councils. There is, therefore, a public relations strategy evolving in order to provide a clear explanation of this new function. Councillor Bentley will be involved in press and media activities in the lead up to first committee meeting on 1 October 2003.

To aid the work of the new committee a website is being created.

This will have the web address www.eastsussexhealth.org. The launch date is to be confirmed.

The primary aim of the website is to inform the public. It will provide up-to-date information about the current work of the committee, a health quiz, access to minutes and agendas, explanations about scrutiny and the committee's role, links to

PCTs, NHS bodies and District and Borough websites and the opportunity for the public to interact through consultations. It will also allow the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee members secure access to papers and documents directly.

Consultation

The work of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee will involve the public in decision-making about health services – focusing on the needs of the community in East Sussex, and enabling people to be as involved as they want to be. The process for consulting with the public – including patients – is being developed.

Conducting reviews

In order to carry out the first scrutiny activities in a responsible way we are seeking to engage the right people to take on the management of specific reviews. Negotiations have been held with a number of external consultants who have experience of working in the NHS and also have project managed reviews for NHS bodies. Another criterion in this search for suitable project managers was their experience of working in local government. Two locally based consultants have been found with all the necessary experience and qualifications and they have agreed to be involved with the work of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee when appropriate.

Reference Group

It has been recognized by the committee members that there is a need for what is to be called a 'reference group' which will comprise people who have been in the NHS and have recent and relevant experience without a conflict of interest. This will be a 'virtual' group of people who

can be called upon to give advice, information and specialist expertise on particular areas of health and health matters that may be put before the committee.

This could be a large group and any help in identifying local people would be appreciated. Currently, we have names of GPs, former Chief Nursing Officers, former District nurses, but more are needed. If you have any suggestions please forward contact details to Roger Howarth.

Officer contact details:

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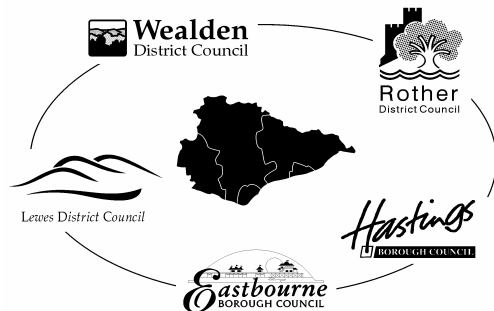
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For further information on health scrutiny, please contact Roger Howarth.