



News Release

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For Immediate Release

Fit for the Future referred to Health Secretary

The Joint Committee scrutinising the Fit for the Future process has agreed to make a referral to the Secretary of State for Health, Alan Johnson.

The decision has been made after a year of meetings to assess all evidence fully, leading up to the decisions made by West Sussex Primary Care Trust (PCT) on the model for future health services and the location of the major general hospital for the county.

Outgoing Chairman Peter Griffiths said: "Ultimately we did not feel the decisions made by the PCT were in the best interest of the health service and the residents of West Sussex and the surrounding area."

The Joint Committee met on Wednesday July 23 at County Hall in Chichester. MPs Nick Gibb (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton), Nick Herbert (Arundel and South Downs), Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham), Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) and Andrew Tyrie (Chichester) spoke to the Committee.

It also heard from the three hospital campaign groups Support St Richard's, Keep Worthing and Southlands Hospitals (KWASH), and Support Princess Royal Hospital, the West Sussex PCT, Brighton and Hove City Training PCT and the South East Coast Strategic Health Authority.

The Committee's agreed resolution was:

'On the evidence available, the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee believes that the decisions made by West Sussex PCT regarding the future configuration of acute services for the people of West Sussex and surrounding areas, are not in the interests of the health service in this area. The Committee will therefore refer the PCT's decisions to the Secretary of State for Health.

'The Committee has made this decision on the following reasons:

1. There remains insufficient clarity about the way in which the service model of one Major General and two Local General Hospitals (LGH) within West Sussex will be implemented, in particular exactly which services will be provided at each hospital and the impact on services provided at hospitals outside West Sussex.
2. There is a lack of clinical consensus for the proposals, which makes it impossible for the Committee to be assured that the proposals are clinically safe and sustainable - key objectives identified by the PCT at the outset of its consultation on the changes.
3. The decision leaves the Royal West Sussex NHS Trust (St Richard's Hospital) in a position which the PCT considers may not be financially sustainable and unlikely to meet the standards



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required of a Foundation Trust in breach of government policy. This would also have applied to Worthing and Southlands NHS Trust had Worthing Hospital been chosen as the LGH.

4. The PCT has failed to satisfy the Committee that it has fully explored alternative options for the retention of consultant led maternity services at Princess Royal and St. Richard's Hospitals. The PCT has not taken into full account recent evidence regarding the potential clinical and financial sustainability of smaller consultant-led obstetric (maternity) units (CLU) which could make CLUs at St Richard's, Worthing and Princess Royal Hospitals viable.'

Evidence supporting the referral and the reasons for it will now be put together and sent to the Secretary of State for Health.

Notes for editors

A Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) is formed when NHS proposals affect more than one area and in this case comprises those local authorities consulted by the West Sussex and Brighton and Hove PCTs. The JHOSC has the power to scrutinise the proposals, make recommendations to the PCTs and if not satisfied by their response, to refer the disputed issues to the Secretary of State for Health.

The JHOSC is made up of councillor representatives from:

Brighton & Hove City Council
East Sussex County Council
Hampshire County Council
Portsmouth City Council
Surrey County Council
West Sussex County Council

Further information on JHOSC meetings and agendas is available at:

<http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/your-council/scrutiny-and-review-unit/health-scrutiny/joint-health-overview-and-scrutiny-select-committeeen>

This press release has been issued by the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

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