



## News Release

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For Immediate Release

### **Fit for the Future independent review recommended, but put on hold**

A full review into the Fit for the Future decisions has been recommended by advisors to the Health Secretary, but put on hold while proposals for a merger between two hospital trusts are discussed.

Health Secretary Alan Johnson had asked an independent panel of experts, the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP), to conduct an initial investigation into the referral by the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Joint HOSC) to decide whether or not a full investigation was required.

The IRP recommended to the Health Secretary that a full review into the referral should be carried out. However, following West Sussex Primary Care Trust's (PCT) announcement that it is putting the Fit for the Future decisions on hold, the Health Secretary has written to the Joint Committee advising that he has asked the IRP not to conduct a full review for the time being.

This is while the Royal West Sussex NHS Trust (St Richard's, Chichester) and Worthing and Southlands Hospitals NHS Trust develop proposals for the two to be merged.

Joint Committee spokesman Andrew Barrett-Miles said: "It's good news that the IRP recommended a full review into Fit for the Future. This demonstrates the Committee's concerns that the proposals were not in the best interests of the health service in West Sussex have been taken seriously."

If the merger goes ahead and a new trust is formed, it will be for the PCT and new Trust to review the Fit for the Future proposals and present any changes to the original decision to the Joint HOSC for consideration.

If the plans for hospital services are unchanged, the Joint HOSC will need to decide whether to re-activate the referral. But if plans are changed, the Joint HOSC will need to consider whether the new proposals are in the best interest of the local health service and whether or not a new referral would be appropriate.

Mr Barrett-Miles added: "The Committee recognises there is potential for negotiations between a new Trust and the PCT to deal with some of the concerns raised in the referral, but we will want to hear from the PCT about how it will resolve other issues regarding services in the north and east of the affected area, particularly relating to East Surrey Hospital in Redhill, the Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath and the wider Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust.

"The Committee will also want to be reassured that any new plans or proposals developed by the PCT with a new Trust would be in the best interests of residents and the health service across West Sussex and affected neighbouring areas."



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.

To read the initial findings by the IRP visit [www.irpanel.org.uk](http://www.irpanel.org.uk). Click on 'current referrals to IRP' and then 'initial assessments not leading to full review'.

### 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-committee.en>

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

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