

**MINUTES OF THE HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE**  
**Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> February 2007 at 7.13 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor Clues (Chair) and Councillors Detre, Fox, Jackson and Matthews.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Farrell.

Also present was Councillor Castle (part).

**1. Declarations of Personal and Prejudicial Interests**

There were none.

**2. Minutes of Previous Meeting - 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006 be received and approved as an accurate record.

**3. Matters Arising**

Councillor Fox noted that he had been informed by Councillor Farrell that as she was unable to attend the meeting, she had instead forwarded a statement to be read to the Committee. However, officers confirmed that they had not received a statement.

**4. Brent tPCT Turnaround Plan Task Group – Initial findings and recommendations**

The Chair introduced the item by reminding members that the Brent tPCT task group had been established by the Health Select Committee in December 2006 to examine the impact of the Brent Teaching Primary Care Trust (Brent tPCT) Turnaround Plan. Following a series of meetings, a report had been produced outlining the initial position of the task group, copies of which were circulated to those present.

It was explained by the Chair that the task group had identified seven areas of concern, the details of which were further outlined. Attention was drawn to the fact that the Turnaround Plan was at variance with the government policy of adopting a “whole systems approach” to health and social care. There were also concerns that whilst regular references had been made at task group meetings for the need to concentrate activities on “core health services”, at no stage had the tPCT provided an adequate definition of this term.

It was noted that the issue of health and equality impact assessments (HIA) had been raised at a number of task group meetings. However, there remained concerns about the fact that the tPCT had taken a decision to conduct HIAs on only some of the 94 strands within the Turnaround Plan, and that insufficient consideration had been given to its overall cumulative impact. Given the diverse nature of Brent as a borough, it was in particular noted that no race equality assessment had been undertaken.

The Chair also expressed the view that where consultation had been carried out, it had been insufficient. He further added that much of this consultation had been retrospective, given that the tPCT had advised that they had begun implementing the Turnaround Plan prior to November 2006, but the task group had not been given the opportunity to consider it until January 2007. Additionally, members heard that the task group report highlighted concerns about difficulties in partnership working that had been brought about as a result of the current situation, lack of accountability of the tPCT Board and the temporary nature of the Turnaround Team.

There followed a discussion between Health Select Committee members on the task group report and recommendations. Councillor Fox emphasised that he did not support the recommendations. Instead, he was of the opinion that the report did not take account of improvements brought about by considerable funding into the NHS in recent years. He also drew attention to recent partnership work, which had resulted in debts owed to the Council from the tPCT having been paid back. Overall, he felt that the task group recommendations might jeopardise the borough from securing future government funding. He also registered concerns that the recommendations would be expensive and time consuming to implement, would not have the effect of protecting the most vulnerable people in Brent.

Conversely, other members indicated their support for the task group report and recommendations. In countering a comment that the report represented political bias, the Chair reminded that the task group had cross party membership. He further asserted that members had worked in cooperation to examine the strands of the Turnaround Plan and their impact on the people of Brent. Another member added that the very nature of the subject matter was political given that the cuts would affect the borough's residents, through both loss of services and a rise in council tax levels. Disappointment was also registered at the failure of representatives from the Strategic Health Authority (SHA) to attend a meeting of the task group to provide evidence.

Members were invited to comment on the specific recommendations made in the report. A question was raised about which expert body would be commissioned to conduct an independent review of the Turnaround Plan's HIA if this recommendation was endorsed. In response, it was advised that a number of organisations existed that

would be capable of carrying out such a review. Martin Cheeseman (Director of Housing and Community Care) added that during discussion between the Council and tPCT it had become evident that there were differing views about what constituted a HIA. Thus, the advantage of using an external organisation to conduct a review was that it would allow both organisations to independently express their views on this issue.

Further to a request for comments on the report, Phil Newby (Director of Policy and Regeneration) highlighted that officers had a responsibility to carry out work as directed by councillors. Nevertheless, he felt that it was important to note that the discursive nature of overview and scrutiny meant that it was necessary to reflect cross party views of the committee. Thus, he stressed that the views in the report represented the views that had been raised by the task group during the scrutiny process. The Chair added that the task group had recognised the very difficult position that the tPCT were currently in. Therefore, he stressed that any comments raised through the scrutiny process had not been aimed at individuals involved.

Some members noted that it would be important to ensure that the expert body commissioned to carry out an independent review was acceptable to the tPCT as well as the local authority. Whilst acknowledging this point, Nigel Webb (Interim Chief Executive, Brent tPCT) expressed reservations about the value of further scrutiny of this kind. He also commented that such a review would not be regarded as high priority by the Trust regardless of which group was commissioned to carry it out. Martin Cheeseman further added that if the recommendations were endorsed by the Council's Executive, the tPCT would nevertheless be given the opportunity to comment before any organisation was commissioned.

At this point, the tPCT representatives were invited to comment on the task group report and recommendations. The comments made by Councillor Fox were endorsed, particularly those relating to the considerable amount of work that had been conducted by both tPCT and local authority officers to resolve the issue of outstanding debts owed to the Council. It was stressed that the vast amount of this debt had now been processed. Overall, Mr Webb queried what the task group hoped to achieve were its recommendations to be adopted. With regard to the possibility of a public hearing on the proposals, he also felt that the tPCT had already conducted a series of meetings with stakeholders and the public, and therefore questioned the rationale of having further meetings.

On the subject of the task group recommendation to commission an independent expert to conduct a review of the Turnaround Plan, Mr Webb felt that it was unlikely that such an organisation would be able to come up with a better HIA than the one that had been conducted by the tPCT. Whilst welcoming any suggestions that a task group panel on NHS finances might be able to provide on the current

situation (Recommendation 2), Mr Webb expressed the view that lobbying central government for further funds was not a viable option.

Councillor Detre then emphasised the view that that the people of Brent were facing an increase in Council Tax which was attributable to the costs passed to the local authority from the tPCT. Therefore, he felt that it was important for the local authority have a public forum in which to look at the situation from all angles. Councillor Fox then noted his view that the entire council tax rise could not be attributed to transferred tPCT costs.

A query was raised about the level of budgetary resources that would be required to fund the recommendations. The Chair responded by outlining that the recommendations would first be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny and the Executive. Phil Newby (Director of Policy and Regeneration) interjected to note that further advice would need to be taken regarding the costs involved in carrying out an independent review.

Whilst acknowledging the points raised about the lack of funding in the health economy, nevertheless, Marcia Saunders (Chair, Brent tPCT) felt that it was important to point to the fact that the tPCT was accountable for its own situation and, consequently, for taking responsibility for returning to financial balance. She also sought to emphasise that as long as the Brent tPCT remained financially out of balance, this was actually diverting resources away from deprived people elsewhere in London.

The Chair felt that it was important to note that as a Council, the local authority had only limited means of expressing concern, one of which was through the scrutiny structure. Whilst the lack of funding within the local health economy was a matter on which all parties were in agreement, he stressed that as a Council it was important for members to explore every angle and option from a Brent point of view. He felt that the task group had provided an important opportunity for members to fully explore the implications of the Turnaround Plan, whilst also providing an opportunity for to hear points of view from other interested parties.

The Health Select Committee took a vote on the recommendations outlined in the Brent tPCT Turnaround Plan Task Group and agreed the following:

**RESOLVED:-**

- (i) that a public hearing on the proposals contained within the Brent tPCT Turnaround Plan be convened to allow residents, services users, and concerned parties to contribute to an open scrutiny of issues and to respond directly to the findings of the task group. The hearing would provide further case studies and examples of the true impact of the proposals.

- (ii) that the Health Select Committee resolve to establish a task group panel on NHS finances to monitor the financial position of all local trusts and the continuing tPCT deficit. Such a panel would be time limited until April 2008 and meet as required on a regular basis.
- (iii) that the Executive endorse an independent review of the Turnaround Plan's Health Impact Assessment to provide an impartial critique of its suitability and, pending its outcome, support an external Health Impact Assessment study, conducted by an expert body.
- (iv) that specific elements of the Brent tPCT Turnaround Plan be referred to the other Overview & Scrutiny Committees of the Council to allow for more in-depth investigation on specific issues, for example;
  - Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny to investigate the impact of proposals on children's services, schools and their budgets, child protection, school nursing, and education & training.
  - Performance and Finance Select Committee to investigate the impact of the plan on the Local Area Agreement, funding, and other key strategies.
  - Overview & Scrutiny Committee to examine the impact of the plan, and its handling, on future partnership working.
- (v) that the Executive continue to lobby Government on behalf of the Borough for a recognition and acknowledgement of a lack of resources in the local health economy, the integrated nature of health and social care, and a protection of health services for the local population.

## 5. **Work Programme**

Copies of the revised Health Select Committee Work Programme for 2007/08 were circulated to those present. James Sandy (Policy and Performance Officer) advised that the April meeting of the Committee had been brought forward to Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007 in order to take account of the timetable for the Annual Health Check process. Patricia Atkinson (Director of Nursing, Quality and Clinical Governance) informed members that due to the timescales involved, the Brent tPCT health check would not at that stage have been considered by the tPCT Board, and would therefore have to come before the Committee in draft form.

The Committee also heard about a forthcoming members training session on NHS finances, the date of which was due to be confirmed in due course. It was noted that the LINKs (Local Involvement Networks) task group was in the process of drafting its final report and recommendations, and it was hoped that the findings would be presented at the next meeting of the Health Select Committee.

Finally, members were informed of plans for a focused meeting in May 2007 during which members would be given the opportunity to discuss options for the Committee's work programme for the following municipal year, consider on-going changes in the health agenda (following the white paper), and comment on the draft Health Strategy for Brent.

#### **6. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Health Select Committee would take place on Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

Members were reminded that this meeting would take place at the slightly later start time of 7.30 pm.

#### **7. Any Other Urgent Business**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm.

Cllr (The Revd) D Clues  
Chair

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