

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
27 FEBRUARY 2025  
6.31 - 8.40 PM**



**Present:**

Councillors Pickering (Chair), McLean (Vice-Chair), C Eberle, Haffegge, Pressland, Watts and Webb

**Present Virtually:**

Councillors Egglestone and McKenzie-Boyle

**Apologies for absence were received from:**

Councillors Barnard, M Forster and Frost

**51. Minutes of previous meeting**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 9 January 2025 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

Responses to all of the queries and requests for information raised in the meeting had been received or formed part of the agenda.

**52. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

There were no declarations of interest or indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

**53. Urgent Items of Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

**54. Public Participation**

No submissions had been made by members of the public under the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

**55. Strategic health update - NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board**

The Commission welcomed representatives from NHS Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB) who provided updates on strategic health issues across the borough, including dentistry; GP surgeries; and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

David Mphanza, Head of Primary Care for East Berkshire, introduced himself and Dr Annabel Buxton, a GP at the Waterfield Practice; Tracey Faraday-Drake, Director for Children and Young People, Learning Disabilities and Mental Health for NHS Frimley ICB; Alison Woodiwiss, Head of Transformation for NHS Frimley ICB; Louise Noble, Service Director for CAMHS, Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust (BHFT) and Tim Langran, Interim Director for Pharmacy, Optometry and Dentistry for NHS Frimley ICB .

### **Primary Care Services Update**

Dr Buxton and David Mphanza presented on the national picture and landscape of general practice services and access, as well as the changes that had occurred over the last few years locally. They discussed the modern general practice model, proactive care, and the transformation of access to general practice including digital front doors. The presentation highlighted the increased demand for GP services and the challenges faced in meeting this demand. They outlined the steps being taken to improve access, such as the implementation of online consultations, extended hours, and the recruitment of additional healthcare professionals. The importance of integrating primary and secondary care to provide a seamless patient experience was highlighted. Another challenge was the limitation of some GP estates, which may lead to closures of those buildings in the future.

### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Update**

Tracey Faraday-Drake and Alison Woodiwiss then provided an update on CAMHS, the transformation of mental health services for children and young people, and the initiatives in place to improve access and support. It was noted a five-year strategy had been put in place to deliver on the local plan for children and young people with learning disabilities and mental health issues. They discussed the challenges faced currently, such as long waiting times and the increasing prevalence of mental health issues among young people. The strategies implemented to address these challenges included the introduction of early intervention programmes, the expansion of community-based services, and the use of digital tools to provide remote support. They also presented performance data showing improvements in service delivery and patient outcomes. It was stressed the system adhered to the 'no wrong door' approach, meaning young people could be referred by anyone, including themselves. It was noted an Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS) had been piloted in other parts of the NHS Frimley ICB footprint and there was an intention to roll it out in Bracknell in the future. The crisis response piece of work had been completed and the service was now available 24/7.

### **Dentistry Update**

Tim Langran discussed the public concern around access to dentistry and the initiatives in place to improve access, including the additional hours scheme and the upcoming procurement of additional units of dental activity. He explained the factors contributing to the current shortage of dental services, such as funding constraints and workforce shortages. The initiatives aimed at addressing these issues included increasing the number of dental training places, providing financial incentives for dentists to work in underserved areas, and investing in community dental services. The discussion also covered the importance of preventative care and public health campaigns to reduce the incidence of dental problems. It was thought there was a reasonable geographical spread of Dentists across Bracknell currently. There was also an opportunity to work with Public Health colleagues around prevention.

### **Question and responses**

A number of questions were raised, including the impact of social media on children's mental health. It was acknowledged social media now played a significant role in shaping young people's mental health and there was a discussion about ongoing efforts to educate both children and parents about healthy online behaviours. An emerging issue, that required further investigation, was that young people were identifying loneliness as a factor and surveys highlighted young people spent less time together than before the Covid-19 pandemic. Another point of discussion was the support available for pharmacies, particularly in light of the increasing demand for their services during the pandemic. The health services representatives outlined the

measures being taken to support pharmacies, such as additional funding and training opportunities.

The following recommendations were agreed:

1. That Cabinet work with NHS Frimley ICB & BHFT colleagues to explore why children and young people were identifying loneliness as a factor for poor mental health, and ways to address issues at source.
2. That Cabinet look at more opportunities for children and young people to socialise in their local communities, and to visit different localities in the borough to see what was working/what had failed in the past.
3. That Cabinet review collation and analysis of health-related data, and that of other health providers, to ensure the data collected was managed effectively to deliver positive outcomes.
4. That NHS Frimley ICB confirmed all GP practices implemented uniform data logs across all GP practices for pharmacy referrals and provided referral rates to O&S Commission members.
5. That Cabinet worked with NHS Frimley ICB colleagues to confirm there were sufficient channels for patients to feedback on the quality of GP practices to aid improvement.

## 56. **Council Plan Overview Report**

The Chief Executive, Susan Halliwell, presented the CPOR report, highlighting key achievements and challenges from quarter four. Among the significant accomplishments were the successful campaign for free bus rides, which aimed to reduce traffic congestion and promote sustainable transport. The adoption of the economic strategy and town centre master plan was another major milestone, setting out a vision for the future development and regeneration of the area. The discussion also covered the financial positions of various council departments, with a particular focus on the measures being taken to address budget shortfalls and ensure financial sustainability.

One of the key challenges discussed was the backlog of Education, Health and Care Plan assessments, which had built up during the pandemic. The Chief Executive outlined the steps being taken to clear the backlog, including the recruitment of additional staff and the implementation of streamlined processes.

### **Questions and responses**

Commissioners asked questions about the delays to Forest View Academy, seeking assurances that the situation was being managed effectively and that alternative arrangements were in place for affected students. The discussion also touched upon the street lighting energy savings initiative, which aimed to reduce the council's carbon footprint and lower energy costs. Commissioners were keen to understand the impact of the initiative on public safety and whether any concerns had been raised by residents. The Chief Executive provided an update on the feedback received and the measures being taken to address any issues. Another topic of interest was the uptake of free bus rides, with Commissioners seeking data on the number of users and the overall impact of the campaign. The Chief Executive shared initial findings, indicating a positive response from the public and a noticeable reduction in traffic congestion. The discussion also covered the HVO fuel trial, with Commissioners expressing interest in the environmental and ethical implications of the trial. The Chief Executive provided an overview of the trial's progress and agreed to share further information on the trial after the meeting.

The following recommendations were agreed:

1. That Cabinet requests further information on the results of the HVO fuel trial, including the ongoing ethics for long-term use of it.
2. That Cabinet requests the results of the Christmas bus trial and comparisons between periods.
3. That Cabinet seek clarification on interim arrangements for children and young people eligible to attend the new SEND school, Forest View Academy, if the Department of Education continues to delay the school, ensuring the best interests of the child are considered.
4. That Cabinet seek a costed risk assessment for deferred maintenance to avoid future financial risk.

Commissioners requested the above information also be shared with members of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission ahead of its meeting on 22 May.

#### 57. **Transition review report**

Councillor Watts introduced the 'Transition – education to employment review' report, which focused on the assistance provided to young people in the borough as they transition from school to employment. The discussion highlighted several positive findings, particularly the ongoing support for young people, including those who were looked after or at risk. Councillor Watts expressed satisfaction with the panel's conclusions and the four recommendations outlined in the report, which aimed to enhance career opportunities for young people in the borough after leaving school and thanked officers and panel members for their hard work.

**RESOLVED** that recommendations contained in section 2.1 of the report were agreed upon and the report would be presented to Cabinet on 18 March.

#### 58. **Work Programme Update**

##### **Health and Care O&S Panel**

Councillor Egglestone, Chair of the Health and Care O&S Panel provided an update, including the upcoming review of Ringmead GP Surgery. The Cabinet Member for Adults and Public Health, Cllr Wright, had informed her about a number of issues currently being worked on including the appointment of the Director of Public Health, Charlotte Pavitt, that the Obesity Strategy was on hold for adults as it was not felt to be working, that there would be a review of the Health and Care Strategy and had visited a number of local voluntary organisations. An update on the Joint Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee: Frimley Hospital would be provided at the next Council meeting on 18 March but it had been confirmed an extension was ready to be opened shortly, along with additional car parking spaces.

##### **Education, Skills and Growth O&S Panel**

It was noted there were no further updates.

##### **Environment and Communities O&S Panel**

Councillor Eberle, Chair of the Environment and Communities O&S Panel, noted the progress on the scope of the social housing scrutiny review but reported it had been delayed due to officer availability. A recommendation was made to amend the work programme to allow the Environment and Communities Panel to review the Public Protection Partnership. The review would focus on assessing the partnership's

effectiveness in delivering key services, such as environmental health, trading standards, and community safety.

**Chair of the O&S Commission**

Cllr Pickering, Chair of the O&S Commission requested all Panel Chairs to review their work programme as they were nearly halfway through the programme.

**RESOLVED** that the Environment and Communities Panel carry out a review into the Public Protection Partnership.

**RESOVLED that** all Panel Chairs review their work programme with their Panel members.

**Chair**