

**COUNCIL MEETING  
28 FEBRUARY 2001**

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**PROGRESS REPORT ON HEALTH ISSUES  
(Chairman of the Health Panel – Councillor Mills)**

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to advise the Council of the work of the Health Panel during the period since the last Council Meeting.

There has been one meeting since November at which consideration was given to several issues which have a significant bearing on the future development of health and social care services in Bracknell Forest.

**Patient Representation - Community Health Councils**

A thorough debate took place on the future of patient representation having regard to the proposed abolition of community health councils. This led to the matter being referred to the Strategy & Policy Committee. It was noted that the East Berkshire Community Health Council was concerned that what was being proposed in its place would not offer a more efficient or cost-effective form of scrutiny and patient representation than that which had evolved in the 26 years that community health councils had existed. Under the proposals, funding for the local community health council was due to end on 31 March 2002 with a likely rundown of the service leading up to that date. In this area, the impact of the Primary Care Group's bid for "Trust" status and the impact of the transition would also need to be considered. The Council's representatives were particularly concerned that there seemed to be a lack of clarity in what was being proposed, and the new arrangements appeared to be both more complex and costly. There was a view that the money being set aside for the new arrangements could be better spent on re-focusing the work of existing community health councils to provide an enhanced service.

In recognition of the importance of this issue, it has been referred to this meeting for further consideration and determination of our response to the Department of Health.

**Bracknell Primary Care Group – Proposal For Primary Care Trust Status**

The Panel was briefed on the key issues surrounding the Bracknell Primary Care Group's bid for "Trust" status. It was noted that the Care Group was seeking the support of the Council for its bid. The key points were:

- To get an agreed shared vision for health services.
- To establish good inclusive commissioning/planning arrangements.
- To help each other find solutions to problems.

It was agreed that there was a need to identify the issues on which the Borough Council and Primary Care Group agreed and disagreed so that the latter could be addressed without impinging on the overall bid, for which there was clear support given the potential benefits. By working together on the plans, it was hoped to reach agreement on a phased programme

of initiatives. Arrangements have been made for a seminar/workshop on 19 March at which Members of the Council will have the opportunity to consider and contribute to development of the future plans of the Primary Care Group. A period of formal public consultation will commence on 19 March. The Health Panel Focus Group will be meeting on 5 March to discuss the content of the consultation document with representatives of the Primary Care Group.

### **Governance Arrangements - Health And Local Authority**

The Panel received a report on the future governance arrangements between the Council and the Health Service which had arisen from the Government's modernising agenda for local authorities and the Health Service which emphasises the importance of effective partnership working in order to support the social, economic and environmental well being of communities. The report detailed the joint arrangements being adopted in Bracknell Forest between the Borough Council and the Bracknell Primary Care Group.

It is a topic on which there will be much more discussion in the coming months.

### **Health Promotion Initiatives**

The Panel also agreed to support, in principle, a proposal by the Primary Care Group to provide Automated External Defibrillators at locations throughout the Borough. To support this, the officers have been asked to investigate methods of funding the provision of the defibrillators and training with a view to reporting back to the Panel.

In addition, at a time when the need for organ donors has been highlighted in the media, I am pleased to confirm that the Council will be including a letter from the Mayor with all electoral registration forms issued later this year encouraging people to carry an organ donor's card.

### **CONCLUSION**

The above report reflects another very positive step forward in the joint working between the council and our health service partners, on which we will aim to build in the coming months for the benefit of all the residents of Bracknell Forest.

**Councillor T Mills**  
**Chairman – Health Panel**