

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
7 APRIL 2022
6.30 - 8.25 PM**



Present:

Councillors Virgo (Vice-Chair), Brossard, Gbadebo, MJ Gibson and Porter

Present Virtually:

Councillors Mrs Birch, Mrs McKenzie-Boyle, McLean and Temperton

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Angell and Mrs Mattick

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Birch, Executive member for Adult Social Care, Health and Housing

Councillor Heydon, Executive member for Transformation and Finance

Councillors Bidwell, L Gibson and Ingham

Timothy Wheadon, Chief Executive

Kevin Gibbs, Executive Director: Delivery

Ann Moore, Assistant Director: Democratic and Registration Services

Melanie O'Rourke, Assistant Director: Adult Social Care

Carol Deans, Director of Communications and Engagement, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

Dan Bradbury, Chief Operations Officer, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

62. Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Commission held on 8 February 2022 be approved as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

63. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

There were no declarations of interest made.

There were no indications that members would be participating while under the party whip.

64. Urgent Items of Business

There were no items of urgent business.

65. Public Participation

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

66. New Heatherwood Hospital

Carol Deans, Director of Communications and Engagement and Dan Bradbury, Chief Operations Officer from Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust provided an overview of the new Heatherwood hospital and what the changes would mean for Bracknell residents. The presentation noted:

- The balance of services was set by local need, with particular emphasis on ophthalmology and orthopaedics.
- The facility had been designed to tackle waiting lists.
- Services were all elective, therefore not disrupted by periods of high A&E admissions and acute care needs.
- The facility was innovative, converting in-patient procedures to day cases to further reduce waiting lists.
- The facility was sustainable and was designed to achieve net zero carbon, including a green roof, good bus routes and electric vehicle charging.
- The previous site would be converted to residential development over the next two to three years.
- The Trust was seeking council support for a letter of comfort to allow a temporary modular unit for maternity services at Skimped Hill for about 3 years.

In response to questions, the following points were made:

- The Trust flexes its staff across its three hospitals (Frimley Park, Wexham Park and Heatherwood) and had been able to maintain staffing levels across all sites, barring exceptional occasions when key theatre staff have Covid on the day. Shortage of theatre staff was a national issue and they were actively recruiting in an attractive part of the country with an attractive new facility.
- Minor injuries had not operated at Heatherwood for quite some time and the existing infrastructure, road signage etc reflected that.
- In June, the Trust would be launching a new electronic patient records system which brought together all of their 200 IT systems. It included a portal for better communication between GP practices and the hospital and allowed patients better access to their notes.
- Free wifi was provided across all of the three Trust hospitals.
- Private facilities were in addition to NHS facilities and private wards could be used flexibly when patient numbers were high. There was no difference in standards.
- The Trust estimated a 9% increase in activity when the hospital was up to full capacity.
- The hospital was open six days a week (not Sundays), 50 weeks a year. The Trust had introduced a ten-hour working day to increase activity levels across all sites.
- The on-site primary care pod was made up of two existing Ascot GP practices which had relocated.

The Chair congratulated the Trust on a fantastic facility and thanked Sir Andrew Morris for his part in instigating the changes.

67. **Council Plan Overview Report**

The Chief Executive of Bracknell Forest Council, Timothy Wheadon, introduced the Council Plan Overview Report (CPOR) covering the third quarter of 2021/22. His summary covered:

- Service plan actions were 90% green
- Key indicators were 86% green

- The period saw a surge in Delta Covid cases, followed by the Omicrom variant, which created pressure on adult social care services and a significant requirement for support for schools.
- The budget was prepared and the Local Plan was submitted in that time.
- The peer review in November found Bracknell Forest Council largely delivers on the areas that people think are important.
- The council received the Ofsted report on SEND services, and a detailed action plan was being produced to submit to Ofsted in June.

The following points were made in response to questions:

- 1.75% national pay increase was agreed in February and paid in March.
- Contingencies were applied to meet the expected overspend in Children's Social Care. The high needs block is outside the Children's Social Care budget and is underwritten by central government.
- Action plans to address the number of care leavers who were Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) were amber. A detailed response on the reasons for this and the improvement plans would be provided.
- The council received complaints in areas which had been under increased pressure, including SEND (where complaints were starting to fall), planning (where recruitment was a challenge) and revenues (pressures due to Covid payments for self-isolation and business support, and the council tax energy rebate).
- The voluntary sector was beginning to use the meeting suites at Time Square. Office space at Time Square was available for the voluntary sector to rent if it suited their needs.
- Long term sickness was defined as greater than six weeks and included Covid-related long term sickness.
- The Council had an agile working policy, which was based on staff being in the office an average of one to two days a week, but this varied across individuals and teams.

68. **Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel Report: mental health**

The Chair of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Gibson, introduced the mental health review report. The review scope was limited to primary care and voluntary sector provision for adults, and the Panel focused on self-help and early intervention.

The review found that:

- there was a large variety of services available with different ways to access them
- a wide range of professionals could refer
- most early intervention services accepted self-referrals
- services were making good use of resources and had the capacity to accept more clients.

However, there were barriers to self-referral, including:

- not knowing the service existed
- uncertainty about the service and what it did
- confusion that there might be a 'right or wrong way' to access help
- low confidence and low motivation.

The review recommendations focused on how to make services more accessible and increase self-referrals.

Members scrutinised the review report and the following points were made:

- low access rates amongst BAME communities. It was noted that faith leaders were very influential and should be included in any promotional campaign, as well as community members with experience of services;
- social media provides an additional tool to contact hard to reach communities;
- employers could also play a part in recognising stress and supporting good mental health;
- there was concern for the mental health of Afghan and Ukrainian refugees. This was outside the primary care scope of this review but it was noted that social care services were receiving additional funding for this;
- a key feature of this review was that it raised awareness of mental health and local services;
- the review included an extensive set of meetings with several partners, which were made easier by being virtual meetings;
- the Panel Chair thanked all partners for their collaboration.

The Commission endorsed the recommendations within the mental health review report for submission to the Executive on 26 April 2022 and agreed to review the implementation of these recommendations after a year.

69. **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report**

The Commission considered the draft report for Council which covered overview and scrutiny activities for the period April 2021 – March 2022.

It was noted that most of the year's work had taken place virtually. Overview and scrutiny had continued to act as a critical friend to the council, and the Commission had scrutinised key areas including strategy, health, crime and disorder and the budget. The Panels' themes had also played a vital role in the way overview and scrutiny worked.

The Chair thanked the panel chairs, vice-chairs and all of the panel members, and concluded by thanking the governance and scrutiny officers for their effort and support in delivering the review reports.

The Commission endorsed the annual report for submission to Council on 20 April 2022.

70. **Work Programme Update**

Each Panel Chair provided a verbal update on work programme progress.

Education, Skills and Growth

The SEND review was due to be completed in July 2022. Panel members had visited SEND units in schools and interviewed head teachers, heard from parents and carers and carried out mystery shopping tasks on the social care offer.

The Panel planned to meet with senior partners from Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and then move to recommendations.

Environment and Communities

The integrated enforcement review has had five panel meetings, and had interviewed senior officers from Bracknell Forest Council, Royal Borough of Greenwich, the police

and the fire and rescue service. It was on track to deliver recommendations in June 2022.

In response to a question, the Panel Chair outlined that the PPP had recruited an officer to deal exclusively with fly tipping, and that CCTV had been installed in fly tipping hot spots. The Commission discussed the responsibilities of residents to dispose of waste correctly and highlighted the PPP website as an excellent resource.

Health and Care

The mental health review had just concluded and the Panel was considering a number of proposals for the next review scope.

CHAIRMAN

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