

## **Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board**

**Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2014 at 6.00 p.m.  
at the Council House, Priory Road, Dudley**

### **Present:**

Councillor D Tyler (Chair)  
Councillor A Finch (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors P Bradley, I Cooper, C Hale, M Hanif, L Jones, M Mottram, G Simms  
and A Taylor

### **Officers:**

R Sims, Assistant Director (Housing Strategy and Private Sector - Lead Officer  
to the Board), S Griffiths (Democratic Services Manager) and M Johal  
(Democratic Services Officer - Directorate of Corporate Resources).

### **Also in Attendance**

B Coombes (Area Manager, CENTRO)  
R Graves (Dudley Group of Hospitals)  
J Evans (Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group)

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28      **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors  
N Barlow and R James.

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29      **Appointment of Substitute Member**

It was reported that Councillor A Taylor had been appointed as a substitute  
member for Councillor N Barlow for this meeting of the Board.

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30      **Declaration of Interests**

Councillor M Hanif referred to Item No 5 (Russells Hall Hospital) and stated that  
he was a Centro member appointed by the Council.

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31      **Minutes**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2014, be  
approved as a correct record and signed.

## **Russells Hall Hospital – Parking and Transport Issues**

A report of the Lead Officer to the Committee was submitted on ongoing parking and transport issues concerning Russells Hall Hospital and the surrounding areas. Information on buses at Russells Hall Hospital together with a list of buses that serviced the area were also circulated to Members at the meeting.

In presenting the report, the Lead Officer to the Committee highlighted concerns relating to parking issues at the hospital and the need to improve public transport. It was also noted that bus operators were reluctant to service particular routes to the hospital as buses were getting caught up in tailbacks.

Ms Coombes (Area Manager – Centro) was in attendance and explained that her role involved the promotion and development of buses across the Black Country. Centro was a public body, however it was pointed out that, although they were responsible for public transport and worked closely with the operators to determine best access for people, they were not responsible for operating services.

During the course of the presentation and in responding to Members queries, Ms Coombes made the following points:-

- It was considered that Russells Hall Hospital generally had a very good level of access to bus services and concerns were due to the lack of communication about the services that were available. Various initiatives relating to marketing and publicising bus service information in conjunction with Russells Hall Hospital had proved to be useful. Discussions were also being held with a view to improvements being made to accessing the hospital site from bus stops.

A Member commented that leaflets with detailed information on bus services should be made available to every household.

- In responding to a comment about there being no direct bus service from Halesowen to the hospital, it was stated that this was one of the routes that National Express had decided to withdraw from July of this year. Centro had raised concerns but failed to make an impact due to reasons from National Express relating to low usage of the service and unreliability issues. However, Centro would continue to have discussions with National Express and Ward Councillors given the impact on frail and elderly residents residing in Lodgefield and Station Roads.
- There were various other transport services available for people with mobility issues such as the Patient Transport Service and Ring and Ride. In response to a query on whether a carer or supporter could escort the patient on the transport provided, Ms Coombes indicated that she was not certain but undertook to submit a response to the Committee.

A Member commented that although there were other transport services available people were not aware of them due to poor publicity.

- Varying changes were made to bus services by the operators and if Centro did not agree with a change, discussions would be held with a view to the operator reconsidering their decision. However, for commercial reasons, operators were not always willing to negotiate.
- Referred to the Voluntary Multilateral Agreement (VMA) which enables Centro to co-ordinate meetings between partners with a view to committing them to introducing measures to improve the quality of bus services and reliability.
- A bus network review would also be undertaken with a view to gathering feedback on positives and negatives from service users. In response to a query from a Member about there being no direct bus service from Coseley to New Cross or Russells Hall Hospitals it was commented that if there was demand for a specific route the matter should be reported through the consultation process for the review.

A Member commented that following a public meeting views had been expressed about varying problems that were being experienced with buses, particularly with reliability on certain routes. It was stated that all Members of the Council should give their full support with a view to overcoming these problems and making a positive impact.

Ms Coombes stated that the bus review was likely to be completed during October 2015 and commented that all Members of the Council would be invited to consultation meetings and that members of the public would also be given the opportunity to submit their views via a series of public exhibitions.

- There were issues with buses getting blocked on roads surrounding Russells Hall Hospital by people parking their vehicles inconsiderately and consequently operators were reluctant to service a route where such problems occurred.

Mr R Graves (Dudley Group of Hospitals) then made the following points relating to parking at the hospital:-

- Outlined the various measures that had been put into place to alleviate parking problems at the hospital particularly during peak periods, which included upgrading security and allocating a taxi drop off and pick up point, with no waiting, being placed at the entrance. In response to a query about provision for picking up patients that were not well or may have had day surgery it was stated that the taxi drop off and pick up point could also be used for these purposes and although it stated “no waiting” the rules were relatively relaxed.

- The hospital had a good relationship with bus operators and any problems were amicably discussed. The faulty barrier which had caused traffic to tailback and consequently buses getting stuck in traffic had now been replaced and had alleviated some of the congestion problems.
- The Hospital had made an additional five disabled spaces available and were satisfied that these numbers were sufficient. However, it was acknowledged that there was a need to continue to monitor and revisit the position with a view to increasing disabled spaces, if necessary.
- In response to a complaint about people parking on the surrounding roads to avoid payment and whether consideration could be given to free or reduced parking, particularly for disabled people, it was stated that the charges were controlled by the PFI (Private Finance Initiative) provider. Any reductions would need to be paid for by the Trust.
- Reduced or free parking was available for repeat visitors, patients with renal problems and those suffering from cancer and it was acknowledged that these concessions should be more widely publicised.
- It was noted that appointments could be better managed, for example, an appointment after 9.30 am could be offered to people over the age of 60 as they were then able to use their bus pass, which in turn could reduce traffic congestion. It was also noted that the appointment booking system should be better publicised.

Ms Coombes commented that Centro were aware of problems with appointments, including the times of appointments from previous feedback and discussions were taking place in conjunction with Sandwell Clinical Commissioning Group with a view to addressing the issue. Some measures had also been put into place to encourage patients to use public transport such as printing public bus information on appointment letters and enabling the public to download a real time bus application onto mobile phones which had been positively received.

- Reference was made to an article in the press relating to two hundred additional car parking spaces planned for Russells Hall Hospital on land owned by the Trust at the rear of the site and it was indicated that discussions were still ongoing. Any decision on extra staff car parking would also be subject to a full environmental impact assessment and full planning application procedures.

A Member commented that although it was acknowledged that this was a quasi-judicial process this was an example whereby the process placed a burden on developments that were vital for the community and it was considered that the Council should take a pragmatic view in applying any local planning policies which were within the discretion of the Local Authority.

The Chair stated that the Council should offer their full support for the development to create additional car parking spaces and it was suggested that an appropriate recommendation be made to the relevant Cabinet Member.

- In relation to additional car parking pressures that may potentially be experienced following the opening of the Urgent Care Centre it was stated that consideration was being given to services based at Russells Hall Hospital being provided by the Guest and Corbett Hospitals to alleviate any problems.
- Feedback in relation to the need for an area to be allocated for dropping and picking up patients and provision for car parking spaces for the disabled to be situated near to the main entrance were being considered.
- In response to a suggestion to provide a “mini bus” bus service to transport staff from car parks to the hospital it was stated that various travel plans for staff such as car sharing were being considered.

Ms Coombes also stated that considerable work had been undertaken by Centro to ascertain travel movements of staff from home to work with a view to providing viable bus services for popular routes.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet be recommended to support proposals being developed by Dudley Group of Hospitals Trust to develop additional staff car parking facilities on land adjacent to Russell’s Hall Hospital to benefit all users of the hospital and the wider community.

### **Review of Senior Management and Organisational Structure**

A joint report of the Director of Corporate Resources and the Lead Officer was submitted on implications of the corporate restructuring on the Council’s future overview and scrutiny arrangements.

The Democratic Services Manager referred to the Kerslake review of Birmingham City Council and informed the Committee that one of the recommendations was to reduce the number of Scrutiny Committees to three with a strategic focus. He also stated that the Centre for Public Scrutiny would be producing a report early in the new year on recommendations to improving the scrutiny process.

Resolved:

- (1) That the proposal as set out in paragraph 9 of the report be approved in principle.
- (2) That a further detailed report be submitted to the next meeting of the Board with a view to recommendations being submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Council on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2015.

The meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.

CHAIR