

## **Minutes of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee**

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2023 at 6.00 pm**  
**At St James's Methodist Church, High Street, Pensnett**

### **Present:**

Councillor M Rogers (Chair)  
Councillor P Atkins (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors R Ahmed, R Collins, A Davies, J Foster, S Greenaway, M Hanif, A Hopwood, P Lowe and M Qari; J Griffiths – Health Watch Dudley (Co-opted Member)

### **Dudley MBC Officers:**

M Abuaffan (Acting Director of Public Health and Wellbeing), J Vaughan (Head of Assessment and Independence) and H Mills – Senior Democratic Services Officer.

### **Also in attendance:**

Councillor I Bevan (Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing)  
N Bucktin and L Broster - Black Country Integrated Commissioning Board  
P King, Dr Bramble, S Cartwright, H Codd, L Dunn - Dudley Integrated Health and Care Trust  
M Guest – Healthwatch Dudley

Together with 17 members of the public

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### **36 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors T Crumpton, L Johnson and K Razzaq.

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37 **Appointment of Substitute Member**

It was reported that Councillor J Foster had been appointed to serve as a substitute for Councillor T Crumpton, for this meeting of the Scrutiny Committee only.

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38 **Declaration of Interest**

Councillor R Collins declared a non-pecuniary interest in view of her voluntary role as a Patient Safety Partner at Dudley Group NHS Russell's Hall Hospital and being a Ward Member for Brockmoor and Pensnett.

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39 **Minutes**

**Resolved**

That the minutes from the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 2022, be agreed as a correct record and signed.

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40 **Relocation of High Oak Surgery**

The Chair, having welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the purpose of the scrutiny exercise and provided a background in relation to the relocation of High Oak Surgery.

A report of the Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS Trust (DIHC) had been submitted and circulated to Members in advance of the meeting, however P King, Chief Operating Officer, DIHC, provided a verbal update on the progress made since publication of that report.

P King, Chief Operating Officer, DIHC, confirmed that the formal consultation process, namely the High Oak Surgery Public Conversation, had now concluded, and all representations submitted and received would be taken into full consideration. It was stated that it had been made evidently clear from the public conversation meetings that it was the local community's desire for a General Practitioner (GP) practise to remain in Pensnett. Information on the inequalities and health needs within the local ward areas had also been provided by the Public Health and Wellbeing Directorate and the difficulties residents had experienced in travelling to the Brierley Hill Health and Social Care Centre (BHHSCC) had been acknowledged.

In considering long-term solutions, it was emphasised that the National Health Service (NHS) did not have funds available to commission the development of a new build, however the Trust would explore the possibility of using alternative community buildings in the area that may be available and fit for purpose to provide Primary Care services. It was further commented, that whilst there was much work to be done and a business case to be considered, proactive discussions would continue with Pharmacy Galleria to consider the offer of the use of those premises and how this may work in accordance with new NHS guidance.

P King, Chief Operating Officer, DIHC, confirmed that in the short-term, General Practitioner (GP) appointments would return to Pensnett by the end of February, 2023. There were two options currently being explored as to how this service would be delivered, namely, the use of the existing High Oak Surgery building, however it was acknowledged that the portacabin required significant repair works following a water leak, or by providing a consultancy room at Pharmacy Galleria. It was emphasised however that at this stage only GP appointments would be available, where all other services would continue to be provided at BHHSCC.

P King, Chief Operating Officer, DIHC, expressed his thanks to everyone that had been involved and contributed to the public conversation and endeavoured to do what was best for the community.

S Cartwright, Director of Strategy, People and Partnerships reported on the current situation and difficulties experienced in relation to Primary Care access and referred to the need to strengthen the Primary Care Service. It was reported that new guidance from the NHS had been published, which highlighted Primary Care and improving access as a national priority focus. The new guidance allowed the opportunity for integrated working with pharmacies to improve and strengthen the Primary Care Service provided within the Community.

Representations were made by Healthwatch Dudley, who provided an overview of the views of local residents in relation to the relocation of High Oak Surgery. In doing so, it was reported that Healthwatch, as part of the Stakeholder Reference Panel, had supported DIHC in conducting a residents pre-consultation listening exercise in July 2021, which 343 responses were received. 265 of those respondents stated that they wished for the High Oak Surgery to remain in Pensnett, with good location and ease of access being the predominate reason. It was also reported that 153 respondents stated that they had experienced poor or extremely poor access to services based at BHHSCC.

It was reported that a further in-depth listening exercise was conducted in late 2021, where 12 local people, who resided in Pensnett and were likely to be most affected by the proposed changes, were contacted by telephone and asked a series of questions. The case studies of those involved were outlined, however there continued to be a strong preference for a surgery to remain in the High Oak, Pensnett area, as it formed an integral and valued part of the community.

As part of the High Oak Public Conversation, Healthwatch Dudley undertook to engage with residents with autism and/or learning disabilities, that were registered at the surgery and Dudley CVS delivered a session to engage with young people, to gather their views in relation to the proposed options.

Healthwatch Dudley's observations and recommendations of the process were outlined, which indicated that they were reassured by the level of scrutiny during the process provided by Dudley Council, Public Health, the Integrated Care Board and that the efforts made by DIHC to ensure Pensnett community's involvement in the form of public meetings, drop-in session, questionnaires and surveys, had been acknowledged.

It was recognised that there had been a low number of people responding to the Public Conversation, which was considered to be due to the Community feeling that a decision had already been made and that there was frustration that the two options presented both outlined plans for High Oak Surgery to remain at BHHSCC. It was also recognised that Pensnett was one of the most disadvantaged areas in the Dudley Borough and travelling to BHHSCC had and would continue to be difficult for those patients with low income, poor mobility and suffering with chronic health conditions, due to the poor and lack of public transport available.

Arising from a question raised by a member of the public in relation to a letter that was sent to all Pensnett residents in 2014 with regards to the proposals to develop a new GP surgery, Councillor P Lowe commented that the proposal had previously formed part of the Lift Project driven by Central Government, however funding had ceased, and proposed developments could not be progressed.

S Cartwright, Director of Strategy, People and Partnerships also commented that discussions had been held with Corporate Estate Landlords with regards to the current site, which was leased from Dudley MBC and with the Integrated Care Board, and collaboratively working would continue to address the issue and to find a suitable alternative that was fit for purpose, although it was reiterated that there were no funds available to build a new surgery.

Councillor I Bevan, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Wellbeing, expressed his thanks to local residents for their efforts and welcomed the return of GP appointments in Pensnett. It was recognised that there was a lot of work to be done within the area to address inequalities and the Scrutiny Committee was asked to give consideration as to how to proceed with the High Oak topic.

The Chief Operating Officer, DIHC, concurred with the comments made in that there was significant work to be done to address bigger issues including inequality and extended his commitment and support to address broader issues of equality.

Arising from a further question from a member of the public in relation to the lease of the current High Oak surgery site, which was due to expire in May 2025, and what the proposals would be after that period, the Chief Operating Officer, DIHC, confirmed that the Trust would proactively work with Pharmacy Galleria to consider the co-location of some services and for them to be an independent contractor, as well as continued discussions with Dudley's Corporate Landlord, with regard to proposals for the existing site.

Wards Members were then invited to make contributions and comments were made as follows:-

- Councillor R Collins welcomed the update provided by DIHC in relation to GP appointments returning to Pensnett, and thanked residents for their instrumental support. It was recognised however that there was much work still to be done to improve health inequalities within the Pensnett area and it was requested that High Oak and health inequalities remain on the Scrutiny Committees work programme moving forward.
- Councillor S Greenaway expressed her thanks to DIHC for listening to the residents and Ward Councillors in acknowledging the need for GP services to remain within the local community and also suggested that the issue remained on the Scrutiny Committee work programme for the foreseeable future.
- Councillor J Foster also expressed her thanks to DIHC for the positive update and for listening to the needs of the local community, as well as thanking the residents of Pensnett for their support and continued aspirations for the area. She also referred to the continued health inequalities within Pensnett and welcomed the ongoing discussions and negotiations with Pharmacy Galleria and Dudley Council with regards to the existing site and other possible service alternatives.

Members of the Committee were then asked to make comments, and in doing so Councillor P Lowe welcomed the progress report from DIHC and expressed thanks to the community for making their views abundantly clear to achieve the aspirations for Pensnett. The exceptional work that Healthwatch Dudley undertook within the community was referred to and the need for the community to continue to support that service was emphasised.

Councillor P Lowe also commented on the cross party working that had taken place to support the community with the campaign to keep GP services in Pensnett and recognised the significant work that would still be required to ensure an appropriate and fit for purpose health service was provided, and concurred that the topic should remain on the Scrutiny Committee's radar, with focus on areas of deprivation and health inequalities.

Whilst the comments of all local residents had been duly considered, Councillor P Atkins referred to the wider impact the relocation had to all residents of the Borough, and referred to the impact to Russells Hall Hospital from increased attendance.

The Chief Operating Officer, DIHC, outlined the process that would follow, in that all comments and feedback gathered as part of the Public Conversation would be analysed and reported to the DIHC Board meeting in February. The report would strongly recommend that some GP services returned to Pensnett community as soon as possible. It was however recognised that BHSCC would need to continue to provide services to support the GP Practice.

Following a discussion in relation to communication and how the information would be communicated to all communities, it was indicated that an announcement would be made by the end of the week following the meeting, although it was emphasised that a report would still need to be submitted to the DIHC Board for the recommendation to be agreed. It was reported that the DIHC Board meeting was open to the public and all would be welcome to attend. All communications would be conveyed and translated accordingly.

Arising from a further question raised by a Member of the public in relation to whether there was adequate staff and resources available to accommodate the proposals, the Chief Operating Officer, DIHC, stated that there was adequate staff and interviews for new GP's to work at Pensnett were already in progress.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the report and verbal update provided at the meeting in relation to High Oak Surgery, be noted and endorsed.
- (2) That the comments made at the meeting, be submitted to DIHC and taken into consideration as part of the public conversation.

- (3) That the agenda item in relation to High Oak Surgery remain on the Scrutiny Committee's working programme, with a further update provided to the Scrutiny Committee in April, 2023.
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The meeting ended at 7.15 pm

CHAIR