

## Minutes of a meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee

Held at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 14th November, 2023 in the Council Chamber, Corby Cube, George Street, Corby, Northants, NN17 1QG

### Present:-

#### Members

Councillor Graham Lawman (Chair)  
Councillor Scott Brown  
Councillor Jon-Paul Carr  
Councillor Bert Jackson

Councillor Charlie Best  
Councillor Anne Lee  
Councillor Dorothy Maxwell  
Councillor Zoe McGhee

#### Officers

Jane Bethea  
Caroline Goulding  
Matthew Jenkins  
Trevor Shipman  
Jayne Skippen

Director of Public Health  
Head of Primary Care Services  
Assistant Director – Commissioning and Performance  
KGH – Vice-Chair/Senior Independent Director  
KGH – Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied  
Health Professionals  
Head of Democratic Services  
Democratic Services Officer  
KGH – Chief Finance Officer

### 14 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

### 15 Members' Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

### 16 Notification of requests to address the meeting

No requests were received.

### 17 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023

**RESOLVED that:** The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th September 2023 be approved as an accurate record.

### 18 Kettering General Hospital Annual Report

The Committee considered a report by representatives from Kettering General Hospital (KGH), outlining its annual report for 2022/23.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried whether an issue of capacity existed for KGH, regarding the significant population growth within Kettering.
- Members queried why KGH's system plan was not aligned with NHS England's bed occupancy target of 93%.
- Members expressed concern regarding the 31-day waiting time for first treatment.
- Regarding the staff vacancy rate of 11.7%, members queried what could be done to increase recruitment.
- One member queried whether the representatives believed that KGH's buildings were to the correct standard to deliver healthcare services.
- Members requested information regarding KGH's group plans and collaborative working.
- Members queried what KGH's budget deficit was at the time of meeting.

In response, the representatives from Kettering General Hospital clarified that:

- Four beds had been closed since Decemeber 2022, due to safety reasons. KGH had looked at its Pediatric Assessment Unit to determine how children may be assessed in a different way, rather than be placed in hospital beds. Opportunities for virtual appointments and to work more closely with primary care also existed.
- The primary challenge regarding bed occupancy existed around discharging complex patients from hospital and capacity issues.
- The rate of vacancies at the time of meeting was as follows: registered nurses - 9.87% (135 full time equivalents), healthcare assistants - 10.93% (74 FTEs), midwives - 15% (24 FTEs). The vacancy rate had improved significantly and staff recruitment was viewed at strong.
- KGH was able to accommodate all procedures it delivered on-site. The most important factor was to ensure that the correct clinical staff were in place to deliver services. The hospital was dependent on national funding to rebuild/refurbish its buildings.
- In 2020/21, KGH and Northampton General Hospital began talks regarding collaborative working as two separate legal entities. 'Fragile' services had been identified to determine how different system models may be implemented to improve these services. An 'academic strategy' was employed to support staff in order to enable them to continue with research and education around providing care.
- KGH had experienced financial challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as costs of industrial action. The deficit position was in the process of being re-forecasted following the month six period. Work was being carried out alongside system partners to determine the most effective way to

manage the deficit, while maintaining patient safety and access to urgent emergency care.

**RESOLVED that:** The report be noted.

## **19 Dentistry Availability and Performance (Verbal Update)**

The Committee considered a presentation by the Head of Primary Care Services (East Midlands ICBs), which provided information regarding NHS primary care dental services within North Northamptonshire.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried whether work had been carried out to determine why a disparity existed regarding children with abscesses between North and West Northamptonshire.
- Members queried whether issues remained regarding access to dental services for children in care under the provision of the Northamptonshire Children's Trust (NCT).
- Members queried whether issues of social class impacted rates of tooth decay and how this situation could be improved.
- Members queried how the access rate of 22% listed in the report compared with the national average, as well as that of the wider East Midlands region.
- Members acknowledged that several dentists within North Northamptonshire had returned their NHS contracts and queried what could be done to increase NHS provision. One member expressed concern that overall oral health could decline as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and a lack of NHS capacity to deliver dental services.

In response, the Head of Primary Care Services clarified that:

- 2.2% of children in North Northamptonshire had experienced issues with abscesses and ulceration, whereas this figure was 1.3% in West Northamptonshire. Nevertheless, this remained lower than the national average. Work was being carried out through the needs assessment to further decrease this number.
- Task and finish groups had been established across the East Midlands to assess services and ensure that looked-after children had clear and easy access to dental care.
- A correlation existed between rates of tooth decay and social class and deprivation. Detailed analysis and mapping was carried out at ward level to determine which areas experienced higher levels of tooth decay in children.
- The national rate of access to dental services was 23.96% therefore, North Northamptonshire was below the national average. Nevertheless, the position was comparable to the average of the wider East Midlands region.

- Residents were able to locate their nearest NHS providers through the 'find my NHS dentist' mechanism. Other local authorities had utilised their legislative position to write to central government to articulate the challenges their constituents experienced in accessing NHS dental services.

**RESOLVED that:** The report be noted.

## **20 Close of Meeting**

The Chair thanked the Committee for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9:10pm.

The next meeting of the Health Scrutiny Committee would be held on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024.