

People Scrutiny Committee – 18th September 2017

Public Questions

Question from Mr Fieldhouse to the Executive Councillor for Health & Adult Social Care

Question 1

“Following this year's General Election, planned government legislation to give STPs a legal underpinning was shelved, and according to the Queen's speech will now not be brought before parliament until at least 2019.

Currently, the Mid & South Essex Success Regime with its STP is a non-statutory and publicly unaccountable organisation.

The Report of the Chief Executive to this special meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee recommends giving authority to a tripartite, joint Health Scrutiny Committee, alongside Essex County Council and Thurrock Council. This will effectively dilute Southend Borough Council's oversight powers of the Essex Success Regime and the local STP, instead delegating them to a committee that, in its Terms of Reference (ToR), appears to use a circular argument to largely justify its existence i.e. by agreeing to form this joint committee to scrutinise the STP on its footprint-wide basis, it will then - and only then, be necessary to consult a NHS body in tandem with other local authorities. (ToR 1. Legislative basis 1.2 & 1.3).

Can the relevant portfolio holder explain to me why the Council believes that relinquishing most of its scrutiny powers to an intrinsically undemocratic committee (ToR 3.1, 3.3 & 3.4), on such an important issue as the STP and the implementation of over £400 million of cuts in NHS health spending in our area, will be beneficial to the residents of Southend that the Council represent?”

Answer

Thank you for your question Mr Fieldhouse about the Mid and South Essex Success Regime and STP and the report of the Chief Executive concerning the forming of a Joint Committee.

The legislation states that when an NHS body undertakes a consultation with more than one Local Authority on a proposal for a substantial development of the health service or substantial variation in the provision of such a service, those authorities are required to appoint a Joint Committee for the purposes of the consultation. An important point

which I have noted in the draft terms of reference is that it is not proposed that the Council will delegate any of its power of referral to the Secretary of State.

As I explained in my answer to your question last year, I want a good health service for the people of Southend. The plans will be subject to full consultation by NHS England on any proposals for service change. This will involve Scrutiny as well as other stakeholders.

As I understand it, the report is making a recommendation – it will be for the Scrutiny Committee members to consider this matter based on the information it has before it.

I do agree with your comment about the governance of the STP – it is one which has been commented on before.

This Council will only support proposals which will lead to improvements in the health service in our area.