

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of People Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor T Cowdrey (Chair)
Councillors K Murphy (Vice-Chair), B Beggs, S Buckley, C Campbell,
P Collins, D Cowan*, N Folkard, J Harland, D Jones, G Leroy, A Line,
R Longstaff, C Nevin, D Richardson, O Richards, A Quinn and
T Watts

*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 31.

In Attendance: Councillors H Boyd, T Cox and J Moyies (Cabinet Members)
J Ayao, W Guy, M Harvey, N Hoskins, A Pike, G Shuttleworth,
J Walsh and S Cox

Start/End Time: 6.30 - 9.09 pm

36 Chair's Introduction & Apologies for Absence

(a) Chair's Introduction

Prior to the consideration of the matters set out in the agenda, the Chair outlined their expectations of the standard of conduct and behaviour to be shown at the meeting.

(b) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dear, Councillor M O'Connor (Substitute: Councillor D Cowan) and Councillor N Ward.

37 Declarations of Interest

The following interests were declared at the meeting:

- (a) Councillor J Harland – (Minute 42,43,44) – son is an NHS employee.
- (b) Councillor N Folkard – (Minute 42,43,44) – relative works for Broomfield Hospital and part of the fundraising team for Southend Hospital.
- (c) O Richards – (Minute 43,44) – lay chair of Patient and Carers Partnership Group with the Royal College of General Practitioners.
- (d) Councillor C Nevin – (Minute 42,43,44) – previous association at Southend and Broomfield hospitals; family members employed at Mid and South Essex Trust and is an NHS employee within an external trust.

38 Questions from Members of the Public

The Committee noted the response of the Cabinet Member for Children Services Education and Learning to a question presented by Ms Mitchell.

The Chair advised that the response of the Cabinet Member for Public Health to a question submitted by Mr Webb, would be sent to Mr Webb as he was not present at the meeting.

39 Minutes of the Meeting held on 31 October 2023

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 31st October 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

40 Ofsted Focus Visit 23-24 May 2023

The Committee received a report from the Executive Director of Children and Public Health, which provided an update on the outcomes from the 2-day Focus Visit by Ofsted which took place on 23-24 May 2023.

It was queried whether some 'Health Visitor' visits were being held in the Civic Centre instead of at home, and why this was happening; to which the Cabinet Member explained that she was not aware of a policy change in this regard and would seek clarification outside of the meeting.

The importance of the 'Right Intervention, Right Time' was emphasised, and the Chair requested that this document be reviewed at a future meeting.

The Committee noted the actions taken so far in response to the findings and commended staff on the improvements that had been made.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function.

41 Vecteo - progress brief on the provision of Key Performance Indicators

The Committee received a report in relation to the ongoing monitoring of the performance of the Vecteo Joint Venture Company established for the provision of passenger transport services.

The Committee welcomed the contents of the report and agreed that Vecteo performance should continue to be reported on a quarterly basis. It was noted that the next briefing for the January-March 2024 quarter would be reported to the first meeting of the Committee in the new municipal year (June 2024).

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function.

42 HealthWatch Southend - GP Access (GP Patient Survey 2023)

The Committee considered a report regarding GP Access from the Chief Officer of Healthwatch, which included the results of the GP Patient Survey 2023 and patient feedback regarding making a GP appointment.

A number of questions were raised by Committee Member's which were responded to by the Chief Officer of Healthwatch.

During the discussion it was highlighted that a GP Surgery (not in Southend) had successfully conducted a trial which asked patients to determine the length of their own appointment upon making a booking with the GP. The Chief Officer advised Members that he would try to find the result of this study to circulate.

The Committee emphasised the importance of co-production and welcomed the documented lived experiences which enriched the data available.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function.

43 Primary Care Access Recovery Plan - (GP Access) - Mid & South Essex ICB

The Committee received a presentation from the Director of Primary Care from the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board which provided an overview of the Primary Care Access Recovery Plan. Although there was no "quick fix" the report focussed on two key commitments:

- to tackle the 8am rush and reduce the number of people struggling to contact their GP practice, and;
- for patients to know on the day they contact their practice how their requests will be managed.

The following key points were highlighted as a means to address the challenges of access:

- All practices were expected to be operating on a Cloud Based Telephony system by March 2025.
- The implementation of a Total Triage model in line with modern general practice.
- To improve the Primary/Secondary care interface through a clinical leadership led approach.
- Optimisation of the workforce.

- Integrated Neighbourhood Teams – to offer appropriate care pathways across the episodic, complex and preventative models that best meet patient need.

The Committee asked a number of questions relating to patient choice, the 'Total Triage' model and interface between Primary and Secondary Care which were responded to by the Director of Primary Care.

Resolved:

That the presentation on the Primary Care Access Recovery Programme be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function.

44 NHS Waiting Times - Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust

The Committee received a report from the Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust which provided an update on waiting times.

It was emphasised that services were distributed across the Mid and South Essex Foundation Trusts sites, as specialities were found in particular sites and patients moved between these sites as well as being given choice as to the hospital they wished to attend.

The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the Chief Operating Officer of the trust, these related to:

- Vacancy rates – these were reported to be at 11%, down from 16% during the Covid period. A&E was highlighted as the most difficult area to recruit and supported by overseas recruitment campaign.
- Staff retention rates and the importance of staff wellbeing.
- The refurbishment of Southend's Emergency Department and ambulance handovers.
- The availability of patient transport to each of the sites.
- Patient choice and the process of how this worked in practice.

The Committee were reassured that patients were moving between the three hospital sites (depending on speciality and capacity available) and that the waiting list burden was evenly spread.

Committee Members requested that additional feedback be provided outside of the meeting on the following items:

- The Southend Level 2 Neonatal Unit and its downgraded status in December 2022 to a Level 1 Special Care Baby Unit, staffing implications, the pilot relating to this and possible consultation.
- Patient Transport Strategy – and any Sustainable Transport Policy which supported this.
- In terms of staff retention, how many staff across the MSE trust were offered flexible contracts.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

Note: This is a Scrutiny function.

Chairman: _____