

Special People Scrutiny Committee – 20th January 2020

Public Questions

Question 1 from Tricia Cowdrey to the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

Question

At our meeting with the East England Ambulance Service in November, we discovered that an external evaluation, carried out by the ORH on behalf of the Trust, revealed that a minimum of two ambulances were required to be at on site at the ambulance station to support the SS3 area. Following our protest meeting in November this year, Councillors and other officials were informed that the Shoeburyness Ambulance station would have its second ambulance reinstated. There was a belief held that the two ambulances would be tethered to the Ambulance Station.

I am reliably informed, however, that, despite being true on paper, there is currently only 1 ambulance based at Shoeburyness and the 'additional resource' is labelled as Shoebury on paper but starts and finishes at Aviation Way and has no additional responsibility for Shoebury or the greater SS3 postcode areas.

This could be considered misleading.

Will the Portfolio holder for Health and Social Care please ensure that the East England Ambulance Service give assurances that, going forward, there will be at least one ambulance responding from Shoebury Ambulance station at all times, where is there is more than one vehicle available for 999 responses within the Southend Borough?

Answer

I would firstly like to thank Mrs Cowdrey for her question and thank her for continuing to highlight the importance of this issue to both the council and EEAST. As reported to Health and Wellbeing Board on 4th December 2019 both me and Cllr Salter led a discussion with senior executives from EEAST. Our objective for the meeting was to:

- understand in greater detail the proposed changes for the ambulance service operating in the east of the borough
- convey our disappointment at not being consulted with on the proposed changes and being provided with potentially misleading information by EEAST
- seek assurances from EEAST re the continued and enhanced provision of ambulances operating in the east of the borough

At the end of the meeting it was agreed to temporarily halt the planned changes for the staffing rota whilst wider engagement with residents, elected Members and Southend's People Scrutiny committee could take place.

We were further assured by EEAST that a planned additional 'double staffed ambulance (DSA)' would operate in the Shoebury, and that this would be effective from 26th November 2020 taking the number of DSAs to two.

During the course of December 2019 and January 2020 EEAST have led a process of engagement with residents and councillors. This meeting, today, at Scrutiny, is an important element to that engagement and I look forward to the presentation from EEAST, their rationale for the changes and the opportunity for the councils' scrutiny committee to perform its' function.

I would like to reassure Mrs Cowdrey and members of the public that I am committed to ensuring that any proposed changes to the provision of health services in the borough are subjected to due democratic process and that they deliver better outcomes for our residents.

Question 2 from Pam Dewey to the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

Question

A public petition of over 1500 signatures was presented to the EEAST in November 2019.. This petition now has over 2050 signatures and asks that residents of the SS3 postcode areas, including the Wakerings, Barling, Shoeburyness and Thorpe Bay, be fully involved in any decision making.

This ambulance station is built upon land held in covenant for the health and wellbeing of people in Shoburyness and the station itself was established following public pressure.

When asked about public consultation, the EEAST advised that they would be meeting with the Shoeburyness Residents Association Board members to explain changes. This organisation represents only a very small minority of the residents affected. Therefore this meeting could not be considered a comprehensive consultation.

As residents we would like to know how this consultation will take place in a comprehensive way in order that those affected have their say. This includes staff, residents across the areas served, as well as the petition signatories.

We hereby ask whether the Portfolio holder for Health and Adult Social Care will encourage Southend Borough Council to agree to liaise with key stakeholders and launch a full consultation on the future of the Shoebury Ambulance station?

Answer

I would like to thank Pam Dewey for the question and thank her for continuing to highlight the importance of this issue to both the council and EEAST.

As the Portfolio holder for Health and Adult Social Care I am committed to ensuring that any changes regarding the provision of health services in the borough of Southend delivers improved outcomes for our residents. I am also committed to ensuring that any changes are consulted on appropriately by the lead NHS organisation.

During the course of December 2019 and January 2020 EEAST have led a process of engagement with residents, Councillors, Trust staff and other affected partners. The Scrutiny meeting today is the next step in the engagement being led by EEAST and I am confident that to a full, open and transparent conversation will take place. I am committed to ensuring that any subsequent engagement required not only follows democratic process but is appropriate.

Question 3 from Kathryn Dewey to the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

Question

Bearing in mind the Council's referral to the Secretary of State detailing concerns around stroke and transport plans and what we've heard from

the media in recent weeks, we have become more and more aware of the lack of coordination regarding patient transfer across the three Hospital Trusts.

Also, with the knowledge that the Stroke Unit is moving to Basildon, the loss of an ambulance station in Shoeburyness will further impact on the morbidity outcomes for residents in the greater SS3 area.

Can the Portfolio Holder for Adult Health and Social Care please push for a commitment from EEAST to ensure that their plans will reflect the changes proposed by the STP?

Answer

Kathryn Dewey highlights an extremely important point regarding the risks surrounding the transfer of patients following any reorganisation of acute services across the three hospital sites within the Mid and South Essex STP footprint. She quite rightly points out that Southend on Sea Borough Council referred the plans for the STP to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care highlighting this particular risk.

As a Council we are clear on the fact that any changes to the provision of health services in Southend must not be to the detriment of our residents and, indeed, improve outcomes for patients. We are fully engaged with the continuing process to develop the plans for the STP. Our engagement is at both operational and leadership level and we are committed to ensuring that partners work together collaboratively to deliver an aligned approach to change.

Question 4 from Kate Sheehan to the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care

Question

Following scrutiny of response time statistics for the SS3 postcode, we are aware that the ambulance service are not meeting response time call targets on a regular basis, especially life threatening emergencies.

Therefore, we would ask the Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care to ensure that the East of England Ambulance Service clarifies how the recent implementation of Building Better Rosters has improved the response times and provision of cover in the SS3 area.

If they can't demonstrate a response time improvement, then we ask that the Portfolio Holder enquires about their future plans to increase the life chances for this area of our population when requiring an emergency ambulance response.

Can we be also be assured that, going forward, the current priority list, which places Shoebury Ambulance station 3rd at all times of the day, will be maintained.

Answer

I would like to thank Kate Sheehan for this question. The issue of the Shoebury Ambulance Station is an important issue that needs to be discussed openly with all affected stakeholders.

The discussion at Scrutiny today is welcomed and I look forward to EEAST addressing the issues highlighted in Ms Sheehan's question alongside the issues highlighted by members of the public in previous questions. Response times, prioritising the placement of Ambulances and ambulance workforce are important elements to improving patient outcomes and should be discussed openly in a public forum through which a democratic debate can take place. I am committed to ensuring that this debate takes place.