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MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Lower Wye Area Committee held
at Chepstow Leisure Centre - Chepstow on Wednesday, 16th October, 2019 at 10.00 am

PRESENT: County Councillors: L.Brown, D. Dovey and A. Webb

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Wendy Barnard	Democratic Services Officer
Roger Hoggins	Head of Service - Strategic Projects (Fixed Term)
Micah Hassell	Inspector, Heddlu Gwent Police
Bronwen John	Integration Project Manager and Monmouthshire Head of Partnerships, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

N. Vincent	Member of the Public
S. Squires	Member of the Public
S. Dovey	Member of the Public
D. Harris	Representing Mathern Community Council
J. Jones	Member of the Public
I. Martin	Shirenewton Community Council
I Brooke	Member of the Public

APOLOGIES:

County Councillors D. Batrouni, P. Murphy and P.Pavia

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

2. Public Open Forum

No members of the public raised additional items not on the agenda, for discussion at this point.

3. Update on Chepstow Hospital: Bronwen John, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

The Chair, on behalf of the Area Committee, welcomed Bronwen John, Head of Service, Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, to the meeting to provide an update on progress against points identified at the Area Committee meeting held on the 17th April and the intentions for Chepstow Community Hospital.

It was explained that there is a clear role in the All Wales Strategy for community hospitals to be utilised as local health, wellbeing and social centres so that there is a locally available range of services delivered either at home, at the GP surgery or another local setting.

Regarding the reduction in beds, it was explained that the new model is that many more people are looked after in own homes rather than in hospital. In Monmouthshire, there is strong integrated care through primary, secondary and third sector care.

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It was explained that two wards have been moved upstairs and now operate as one unit. This is beneficial in terms of working practices and is safer for patients. The move has created space for the establishment of a frailty assessment unit. The project is currently awaiting funding and it is planned to appoint a consultant for very frail people living in the community who want to stay at home. The unit will have the ability to access x ray and diagnostic tests so that the patient is enabled to have a short period for tests and assessments then is able to return home as soon as possible. If a return home is not possible, a bed can be arranged in Chepstow or the Royal Gwent Hospital for further treatment as necessary.

It was explained that main services include Outpatient Services for a wide range of clinics, primary care, mental health services using the former Minor Injuries Unit. There is also a large older adult mental health facility. Extensive work is planned to increase capacity for consulting rooms and for the provision of local operations. There is a bid to create more capacity in the day hospital area.

One of the benefits of moving the wards upstairs has allowed the older adult community mental health team to have office accommodation in the former Caerwent ward which is working well next to the clinics on the same corridor. There are likely to be other proposals for the remaining parts of Caerwent and St Arvans wards yet to be confirmed.

It is also hoped to develop an integrated children and families base similar to the pilot project in Caldicot where families experience seamless delivery of services from all sectors.

Regarding the DVT pathway model, it was explained that this has changed and it is proposed that Monmouthshire GPs pilot this service instead. This is awaiting costing and approval but the intention is to start before the end of February 2020 if agreed.

In terms of Audiology, additional timetabled slots have improved access for patients

The Care of the Elderly Service with a specialist from the Royal Gwent Hospital continues and it was highlighted that the frailty model will positively impact on services to elderly people; those with specific, urgent problems will be able to attend to a weekly clinic pending the appointment of a consultant. Outreach services will cover the remainder of services. The Committee were reminded that, when open, the most acute cases will be dealt with in The Grange Hospital, medical admissions will be in the district hospital (Royal Gwent) and other procedures can be handled in local hospitals including Chepstow.

There was no information on the issue previously raised about cold meals in the Royal Gwent Hospital as no further details had been supplied. It was agreed to pass the feedback received to the relevant team for follow up.

A list of Outpatients services will be updated and recirculated to the Committee.

It was confirmed that beds are used to accommodate local patients for terminal care who choose to die at home with support from St. David's Hospice and District Nurses. There are no plans for specialist palliative care beds at Chepstow Hospital. The definition of specialist palliative care was requested.

In response to a query about delays in relation to x ray diagnosis, it was explained that there is a national problem due to high demand and insufficient radiologists. Diagnoses have to be prioritised accordingly and whilst there is no short term solution, more radiologists are being trained.

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Referring to the discontinuation of the Minor Injuries Unit, it was queried if there is scope to provide a nurse-led facility as an alternative, referring to the model in Ebbw Vale. It was explained that there is concern nationally about Minor Injuries Units and the decision to close units is due to the risk to patients who may have received inappropriate treatment from non-specialist nurses who have been expected to cover a range of services. In the future, The Grange Hospital will have a major accident unit and Nevill Hall, Ysbytty Ystrad Fawr and Royal Gwent Hospital will provide appropriate minor injury services. There are no plans to change the new approach. A Member commented that the reason given for the closure had been lack of staffing locally but rumoured locally that staffing was deliberately cut. It was re-emphasised that the decision was taken for the clinical safety of patients.

A Member commented that the wait for standard GP appointments of 5-6 weeks for non-urgent matters was unacceptable. It was confirmed that the ratio of GPs to patients in Chepstow is accurate. It was not thought to be related to the numbers of elderly population and was queried if there may be unrealistic expectations. GP surgeries manage their own appointment systems and concerns can be raised with the practice direct.

It was confirmed that negotiations are in process to locate a defibrillator outside the hospital and a decision on funding to do so is awaited.

In response to a question from a Member, it was responded that there are regular cross border meetings and some issues involving interpretation of responsibilities have been identified. It was made clear that financial responsibility for patients living in Gloucestershire accessing GP services in Monmouthshire rests with Wales. A discharge liaison service is now in use to enable transfer to Chepstow and Lydney District Hospital and vice versa.

In response to a second question, it was explained that the suggestion that GP surgeries offer an optional enhanced service for minor injuries has not been taken up by practices in Chepstow; the Health Board has no influence over this decision. Enquiries should be directed to the respective practices. It was confirmed that it is likely that the Minor Injuries service in the Forest of Dean will be discontinued.

Regarding residential development in the Chepstow area and concerns about pressure on primary care services, it was confirmed that the Health Board maintains a close relationship with the Planners and that funding is allocated per patient.

A Member of the Public criticised the amount of money that the changes cost and was not in favour of the amount of change. It was explained that the national model is being followed and the changes are not specific to Chepstow.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that there is no connection between GP services in Chepstow and Chepstow Hospital medical services (unlike the different model in Monnow Vale Hospital where GPs control medical services).

With regard to housing development close to Chepstow, it was confirmed that there is liaison with Forest of Dean Planning Department and that branch surgeries are also consulted.

The representative of the Health Board was thanked for attending the meeting and for the offer to return to answer future specific questions.

4. High Turnover of Staff: Inspector Micah Hassell, Heddlu Gwent Police

The Chair welcomed Inspector Micah Hassell, newly appointed Inspector covering Caldicot and Chepstow, to the meeting to discuss the high turnover of staff.

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It was confirmed that a cycle of change can be expected going forward as officers' skills may be needed elsewhere and will be resourced accordingly; a 12-18 month deployment can be considered normal. It was emphasised however, that regardless of staff changes, priorities set by the local inspectors don't change and that they continue to drive services locally.

Inspector Hassell was thanked for his attendance, and that of PCSOs at community council meetings. Good communication with county councillors was encouraged with all agreeing that a wider network approach to policing is to be welcomed.

The Clerk was asked to provide a list to the Inspector of the County Councillors representing the Lower Wye area.

Committee Members brought up the following matters:

- Parking issues in the town: It was clarified that responsibility for enforcement of parking infringements has been moved from the Police to Monmouthshire County Council. Committee Members commented on the wider issue of how to rejuvenate business in town, and encourage shoppers and visitors back to the town and the need for appropriate parking facilities.
- Speeding: It was confirmed that there have been a high number of traffic enforcement calls. Motorcycles were highlighted as a particular concern. The Inspector referred to his plans for tactical approaches and intelligent deployment of staff to answer concerns. The Inspector will be attending a meeting tomorrow to consider speeding in the Wye Valley.
- Traffic incidents: There have been less collisions at the Prince of Wales Bridge since the removal of the toll booths. Station Rd has been identified as the location of a higher than average level of accidents and traffic light offences. A representative of Mathern Community Council reported that its members seek details of accident blackspots over a five year period. It was explained that some accidents are noted as damage only and are non-recordable. It was also noted that speed is not the sole cause of accidents. The value of using local knowledge was acknowledged as a valuable resource.

A member of the public asked at what point speeding motorcycles would be recorded stating that he had reported four motorcycles but received no further information. The Inspector explained that the early notification provides the ability to identify future issues. GoSafe vans will also produce prosecutions. The member of the public was sceptical about the Speed Policy and the use of incomplete data sets. It was confirmed that drugs and speeding vehicles are the highest priorities in the area.

- A Member questioned the rationale of a high turnover of staff as relationships build over time. It was reiterated that frequent staff changes are common in community policing nationally. Notwithstanding, it was confirmed that there are no moves anticipated.

5. Roads Update: High Beech Roundabout/ Chepstow By Pass, M48 Link, A466, Road Surface between Bigsweir Bridge and Llandogo - Roger Hoggins , Head of Operations and Paul Keeble, Group Engineer, Highways and Flood Management

- High Beech Roundabout: It was confirmed that as this is a trunk road, it is the responsibility of Welsh Government. Welsh Government has commissioned a study to review options for improvement to improve traffic flow in the area. Assurances were given that the study is during this financial year for works in the following year. It was confirmed that the options (including those put forward by AB that were suggested at the Transition Chepstow event) have been passed to the consultants. A commitment was given to circulate the report when available.

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- Feasibility M48 link/Chepstow Study: It was reported that the WelTAG and WebTAG Stage 1 studies have been undertaken and have produced proposals for further investigation. Some “quick wins” have been identified e.g. better public transport as well as larger projects including a by-pass, rail and bus improvements and better links, and the junction on M48. Tenders have been invited to identify the likely costs of a Stage 2 study; these will be assessed this week. Consultation with all stakeholders (Welsh Government, Welsh Office, Gloucestershire County Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Highways England) will be the next step. If funding is confirmed, Stage 2 will involve more detailed consideration of the identified proposals, including Active Travel options for local journeys, to encourage increased walking and cycling opportunities.

A Member complained that updates are being provided to Transition Chepstow but not County Councillors and asked that proposals are made available to ensure that as much local knowledge as possible is taken into account before implementation.

It was queried if any S106 money was available especially from the Fairfield Mabey site.

It was queried if there is any opportunity to put an interim solution into place at High Beech to reduce risk for motorists.

- A466 Wye Valley: Information was provided that following the works this year, a second tranche is planned for March 2020 dependent on ecology. It was confirmed that the consultants had been asked about the feasibility of delaying the works for 12 months and there were initial concerns expressed in terms of stability of structure and permits. A commitment was given to let communities know when the closure might be, before the end of the year. It was agreed that there were many problems with drivers ignoring diversion signs.

6. Rail Update - Services to Bristol and Cardiff, Severn Tunnel Junction Development and Chepstow Station: Roger Hoggins, Head of Operations

Unfortunately the rail update was not available and a briefing note will be circulated after the meeting. Any specific queries will be welcomed.

A Member complained that the lack of a lift at Chepstow Station discourages use by disabled people. It was confirmed that this matter is under discussion.

An update on progress with the Metro was requested.

7. To note the record of the last meeting held on 17th July 2019

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

8. Items for the next agenda

- The Clerk was asked to contact Members not present to encourage attendance at the next meeting and to enquire if there are any barriers preventing attendance.
- Funding response for the Stage 2 WelTAG
- Invite Welsh Government to attend re: High Beech Roundabout
- Progress report on Metro.

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9. To confirm the date of the next meeting as 22nd January 2019

The meeting ended at 12.35 pm