

Council – 7 November 2005

Arrangements for scrutinising the reconfiguration of health services in Walsall

Service Area Corporate Performance Management

Wards All

Summary of report

In the context of a publicised potential trust merger, on 4 July 2005 Council resolved to establish a Time Limited Health Scrutiny Panel to receive information from the Walsall Hospital Trust on their proposals for the future delivery of hospital services in the borough and to submit its views to the Council. In the course of the pre-consultation on the proposals to be put forward to the formal consultation, it has been decided not to proceed with the option of a merger.

This report seeks Council's approval to the recommendations set out below.

Recommendations

Council is recommended, in light of the decision that a merger of hospital trusts has been dropped and in the context of an ongoing consultation on proposals for a level of clinical realignment to:

- (1) Note the work of the Time Limited Health Scrutiny Panel in scrutinising the available information regarding the proposals and disestablish the Panel as the substance of the consultation is now outside of their remit.
- (2) In consideration of the information presented in this report delegate to the Health and Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel the authority to enter into joint scrutiny arrangements when required under legislation and in accordance with the councils constitutional requirements.

Background information

The Time Limited Health Scrutiny Panel was established by Council as a response to the concerns about a possible merger between the Walsall and Wolverhampton acute hospital trusts. At the stage of its constitution the further issues about clinical reconfiguration were seen as separate, though linked issue. Following a decision of the Manor Hospital Trust Board on 2 November this proposal has been dropped, it is proposed that the special panel is disestablished.

In the likelihood that there will nonetheless be proposals for closer alignment of specific clinical services between 2 or more boroughs in the Black Country, which will have a substantial impact, then there may continue to be a requirement for a joint scrutiny panel to be established across boroughs. If required, this will be needed in the same consultation timeframe currently proposed to run from mid November 2005 to February 2006 (although this may slip).

Should this be the case then it is proposed that this be the responsibility of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel and that in addition to their existing delegations they are delegated the power to enter into joint scrutiny arrangements when required under legislation and in accordance with the Council's constitutional requirements. This is where the function lies across the other affected Black Country boroughs.

The special scrutiny panel is to be thanked for all of their work on the proposed terms of reference and that this work be passed to the Health and Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel to consider in the context of the probability of a continued requirement for joint scrutiny arrangements.