

Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care – 4 December 2023

Written question from Cllr Clare Mosdell to the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care

The transition to ICBs over the last 18 months was intended to bring decision making closer to the point of care.

Last year at the NHS Confederation Conference, Steve Barclay highlighted how this change from CCGs would ensure there would be a place-based approach to tackling health inequalities through local commissioning. However, on the Isle of Wight the HIOW ICB move has taken decision making powers to the mainland and removed the Island's autonomy.

When coupled with the financial position of the HIOW ICB, the Island's separation by sea and additional barriers to sharing services with neighbouring areas, we are seeing a potential loss of funding for Primary Care on our Island of close to £1m this year alone.

Will the Policy & Scrutiny Committee for Health and Social Care direct Officers to make representations that encompass our unique position and hence ensure that all Island factors are taken into account in decision making by senior health administrators at a place-based Island level?

Response

I thank you for the question, which is poignant, timely and relevant.

As Chair of the Policy and Scrutiny Committee of Health and Social Care I have been deeply concerned that the restructures of the new HIOW ICB, the new Portsmouth and IW Hospital Trust, and the new mental health trust covering Southampton, Portsmouth, Hampshire, and Isle of Wight (Project Fusion), has taken away the autonomy of the Island and reduced the Island's voice in governance in NHS bodies.

The Committee has tracked these recent changes and received briefings including the financial implications of the new bodies such as HIOW ICB. This is on our workplan, and we will have a further briefing in the new year on the 2024/25 budget.

I have recently requested for a list of all the Island representatives on all the new NHS bodies relevant to the Island so the Committee can establish strong communication links and make sure the needs of Island residents are strongly represented. Healthwatch IW is also working with all the other Healthwatch organisations across the new regional bodies in this regard.

I have spoken to new senior management of all NHS bodies and raised my concerns as Chair and sought reassurance that the special needs of the Island and the additional costs (financial and welfare) attributed to the crossing of the Solent are not lost but prioritised.

I am working closely with Healthwatch IW, part of the Committee, and the Scrutiny Officer to track this NHS transformation on the Island and regularly communicate with NHS Senior Management and those Islanders who sit on the new governing bodies.

I am grateful you have raised the issue of commissioning which has always been a deep concern of mine as this is about services at grass-roots level. It is essential there is a clear IW identity within the commissioning process as certain mainland services do not fit well within an Island context.

In a recent meeting about Project Fusion and the place-plan approach in regard to mental health services on the Island, senior NHS managers praised the network of peer-support grassroot projects. They saw Isle of Wight as a beacon of excellence regarding peer support and the mental health alliance and emphasised they wish to use this model an example of good practice.

As part of my response to your question, I will put it to the whole committee on the 4 December as a way of getting a collective/committee resolution that publicly records our concerns about making sure these changes brought by National Government and NHS do not have a negative effect on our residents, which we fear.

The IW Council approved a motion at its last Full Council brought by the Liberal Democrats to consider all inequalities including health between the Island and the mainland and how best we tackle these whether through lobbying Government or seeking legislation. We have a duty as the main elected body on the Island to advocate this evidenced Island inequality.

If the committee endorses your and my own concerns through a resolution, I will write to all the NHS relevant Chairs and CEO's and in particular the HIOW ICB. As representative of these NHS bodies attend the meeting on Monday, there will be an opportunity for them to respond as well.

As a committee we also have the mechanism of being able to raise any concerns with Parliament's Health Select Committee.

As you say, the Conservative Government implemented this infrastructure restructure in commissioning in regard to HIOW ICB as part of a place-plan based approach which appears contradictory when the majority of decision making now will be from the mainland. Perhaps, in your role as the IW Conservative group leader you can write to the Health Secretary and the Island's current existing Conservative MP as well and raise your concerns.