

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12th December 2012

PRESENT:-

Conservative Group

Councillor Mrs. Plenderleith (Chairman), Councillor Atkin (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor and Mrs. Patten.

Labour Group

Councillors Bambrick, Bell, Mrs. Mead and Pearson.

OS/17. **APOLOGY**

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Mrs. Hood (Conservative Group).

OS/18. **EMAS CONSULTATION – “BEING THE BEST”**

It was reported that East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) was undertaking a consultation on plans to review its service called “Being the Best”. As part of this, a public consultation event was held at the Green Bank Leisure Centre on 5th December. The EMAS proposal was to create purpose built hubs, community ambulance posts and standby points that were fit for the future. This would see the introduction of 118 community ambulance posts/standbys and 13 hubs to replace the current 66 ambulance stations. The Chairman welcomed Andrew Spice, the Commercial Director and Pete Bainbridge, the Clinical Quality Manager for Derbyshire to the Meeting. She also welcomed County Councillor Mrs. Farrington who was Chairman of the County Council’s Scrutiny Committee responsible for Health.

Mr. Spice spoke to the circulated presentation slides, initially providing statistics on the size of the area, its population and numbers of calls for service. EMAS responded to some 776,000 calls per year across the region. It had 2 key targets, to attend an incident within 8 minutes of a call being received and within 19 minutes, to get underway to the hospital. It was acknowledged that these targets were not being achieved currently and recent statistics were given. It was questioned whether penalties were imposed for failure to achieve targets and for the last 2 years these had been redirected into providing service improvements.

Delays were currently experienced as staff had to check ambulances, both to ensure that they were roadworthy and carrying the correct equipment. This could take up to 50 minutes before the ambulance responded to calls for service. A contrast was provided of these roles against the medical expertise required for the staff’s core duties.

Mr. Spice then outlined proposals to replace the current 66 ambulance stations with 13 hubs and 118 community ambulance points. Some of these would be located at multi-agency stations and in other places, low cost modular buildings would be used. At the 13 hubs, other staff would ensure the vehicles were made ready, so that the need for ambulance crew checks were minimised. Reference was also made to the current condition of the ambulance stations, which were dated and no longer 'fit for purpose'.

There was discussion about cross-border arrangements, as many South Derbyshire residents accessed services at Burton Hospital. Related issues were vehicle breakdowns, emergency cover and patient transfers. There was a misconception that it was a local team delivering the service for each area. It was confirmed that the proposals in this consultation mirrored best practice elsewhere. Another issue raised was the wasted time for ambulance crews at hospitals through slow patient handover. This issue was recognised and hard data was being gathered to address it.

A series of questions was submitted about the vehicle fleet, its replacement, the growth in population and increasing numbers of calls for service. Mr. Spice responded to each of these issues, confirming that there was a fleet replacement programme and it was hoped that the proposals would reduce the amount of time taken before vehicles were out on the road. It was further questioned whether the proposals were self-financing and whether some property sales would be required before the new proposals could be implemented. EMAS had the ability to commence delivery of the new programme, and given the current market would not rush to dispose of assets, in order to achieve the best return on them. A further issue was current sickness levels within the Service.

Another Member explored the amount of time that ambulances were off the road. Also, the proposed hub locations were questioned, given the County's urban and rural diversity and it was suggested a further hub be provided in Derbyshire. Further questions about the programme being dependent upon asset sales and how EMAS was working with general practitioners to reduce unnecessary calls for service were responded to. The final question areas concerned staff travel to work times, as a result of the proposals and how the current service was delivered throughout the night, linked to the lack of facilities currently for staff. The Chairman also reminded Members of the feedback received both from Derbyshire County Council and Foston and Scropton Parish Council. Mr. Spice and Mr. Bainbridge were thanked for their presentation and for responding to Members' questions.

It was agreed to submit a response to the consultation as follows:

- **Overall, it is considered the proposals are necessary to modernise the Service and particularly will improve facilities for staff.**
- **It is considered that time spent by staff travelling to the new hubs will replace the time spent currently on vehicle preparation and maintenance.**

- **The Committee would like to receive a high level summary of the findings and more specific findings from Derbyshire, to report back to a future meeting.**
- **The Committee has considered the consultation response from Derbyshire County Council and endorses the points contained in it, in particular the siting of a hub in South Derbyshire**

Note: At 6.55 p.m., Councillor Bell left the Meeting.

OS/19. **REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 – POLICY AND GUIDANCE DOCUMENT**

The Committee received a report which set out two significant changes affecting the Council's use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) and sought approval to changes to the Council's Policy and Guidance document, which had been circulated.

Due to legislative changes, if the Council wished to use certain powers under RIPA, it would need to obtain an Order approving the grant or renewal of an authorisation or notice from a District Judge or lay Magistrate, before it could take effect. The new judicial approval mechanism was in addition to the existing authorisation process. The current process for assessing necessity and proportionality and other current arrangements remained the same. Additionally, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources) Order 2010 had also come into force. These related to the directed surveillance crime threshold and the effect of the Order was set out within the report.

The Inspection regimes of the independent RIPA Commissioners would continue to apply. They would continue to advise the Council of procedures and training to be adopted, reporting to Parliament on relevant trends and findings. The role of Members would not be affected by the legislative changes and quarterly reports would continue to be submitted on the usage of RIPA.

It was agreed to approve the Council's Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 Policy and Guidance Document as submitted, following the legislative changes set out within the report.

OS/20. **CEMETERY SERVICE AND PROVISION OF CEMETERY SPACE**

A report was submitted to provide background on the Cemetery Service, progress to date and to seek direction and priorities. Members were reminded of the key points within the scoping document approved by the Committee in June 2012. The review had been affected by the long-term sickness of a key officer, but to date the main issue raised was the lack of space at Church Gresley Cemetery. It was confirmed that the Council did not have a statutory duty to make provision for burials and details were provided of the enabling legislation dating from 1972 allowing the operation of Cemeteries and Crematoria. Custom and practice indicated that this was a provision that was expected, often within short travelling distances of most residential areas.

There were currently six cemeteries within South Derbyshire, of which details were provided. The Council also offered grant aid support to 13 churches, to assist with the maintenance of churchyards that were no longer used for burials. A table was included in the report showing the availability of grave plots and those for cremated remains at each of the six sites. Information was also supplied on the current budgets for the Service.

A shortage of land meant that it came at a high premium and a lack of burial space was becoming a national problem. Attempts had been made by the Council's Property Services Unit to identify new space as close as possible to the existing cemeteries and in particular at Etwall and Church Gresley. There were no obvious alternate locations within the property portfolio. However, a clear policy direction given the identified issues would add impetus. Initial discussions had been held with managers from Planning and Planning Policy, to explore options to use Section 106 funding or secure land specifically for provision of a new cemetery. There was some money already within a Section 106 fund, although it was unclear whether this would be sufficient to purchase a new site. If provision of new cemetery space was a clear Council priority, then an officer working group could be formed to identify and progress sites and options. Other issues reported were the potential for use of compulsory purchase orders, the difficulty in gauging the amount of land required for cemetery provision and the total cost implications in establishing a new cemetery.

In addition to the circulated report, statistics had been received from neighbouring authorities on the number of burial spaces available within their areas. Officers responded to questions about the lack of capacity at the Etwall Cemetery and the potential for a woodland burial site within the District. There was a consensus amongst Scrutiny Members that the Council should continue to provide cemeteries and that officers should investigate sites for additional cemetery space, both at Church Gresley and at Etwall. In submitting this recommendation to the Housing and Community Services Committee, an offer would be made to undertake further scrutiny work on this service area, to look in detail at statistics relating to churchyards, woodland burials and statistics on the number of burials as compared to cremations, both at Bretby and Markeaton Crematoriums.

The Committee agreed to receive the report and asked officers to report to the Housing and Community Services Committee, as set out above.

OS/21. **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a detailed annual review of its work programme. Members were reminded of the arrangements for the previous year, where a consultation process was undertaken through February, to gather views and suggestions for potential review areas, from a range of stakeholders. The Committee indicated its consent to proceed on this basis for 2013. It was also noted that a presentation was due to be received at this Meeting on the elections function. The Chief Executive, as Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer had commissioned a review of the function, which would be completed in early

2013. The initial proposals would be submitted to this Committee in March, before any final decision by the Finance and Management Committee.

A verbal update was provided on the East Midlands Regional Scrutiny Meeting to be held on Friday, 14th December 2012. A report back was then given from the Members involved in providing scrutiny support to Erewash Borough Council.

It was agreed to note the work programme report.

MRS. A. PLENDERLEITH

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 7.40 p.m.