

**Minutes of the meeting of the Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee,  
held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford on Thursday 7 March  
2024 at 10:30am**

---

**Present**

Cllr Jeff Henry (Chairman)

Cllr Richard Moore

Cllr Dave Harris (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Stephen Robinson

Cllr Paul Gadd

Cllr Paula Spenceley

Cllr Eddie Johnson

Cllr Mike Steptoe (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr June Lumley

Sharon Westfield-de-Cortez

Cllr Anthony McQuiggan

**Apologies**

Cllr Ian Grundy

Cllr Daniel Land

The following officers were supporting the meeting:

- Richard Buttress, Democratic Services Manager
- Freddey Ayres, Democratic Services Officer

**1. Membership, apologies, and declarations**

Apologies were received from Cllr Grundy and Cllr Land.

Cllr Henry declared that he was an ECC (Essex County Council) appointed governor at Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust.

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 1 February 2024 were approved and signed as an accurate record.

**3. Questions from the public**

No questions from the public were received.

**4. EPUT (Essex Partnership University Foundation Trust) Adult Mental Health Services**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting:

- Paul Scott, Chief Executive
- Alex Green, Chief Operating Officer.

The committee received the following update and responses to their questions:

- Reduction in vacancies through targeted recruitment campaign
- Safety first, safety always strategy ending. Results published later in the year

- Being replaced with Quality-of-Care Framework, being launched in April 2024
- Continuing to prepare for the Lampard Inquiry, making sure staff are supported to come forward
- CQC (Care Quality Commission) identified 73 must do actions and 275 sub-actions following inspection and report
- Introduced a new approach to responding to CQC inspections, with actions agreed locally and owned by staff
- 6% of must do actions completed so far (as of 5/3/2024)
- 69% of should do actions have been completed so far
- EPUT will not sign off until the CQC action has been imbedded into practice
- Most important actions have been addressed first and are on track with the action plan
- Number of upcoming inquests as a cluster because of Covid-19
- Making good progress on out of area placements. Currently 24 people placed out of area
- Rise in demand from older adults, and longer length of stays for those older adults. Working with local authority partners to address this
- Continue to innovate services. Always reviewing patient feedback
- Embedded 24/7 mental health care department at Basildon Hospital
- Joint mental health response vehicles across Mid and South ICB (Integrated Care Boards) and the Hertfordshire and West Essex ICB
- Rough sleeper programmes in each area
- Staff have reported they feel more supported and safer in delivering care
- Enabling visitor access 24/7, appreciating that not everyone works between 9 and 5
- Positive feedback received from patients, including from those at the Linden Centre
- Focussing on regularity of staff on inpatients wards
- Welcomed 1700 new members of staff last year, including 220 from overseas
- Turnover rate is back to pre-pandemic levels and overall vacancy rate is currently at 8%
- New working in partnership with People and Communities strategy, which was agreed by the Board in November 2023
- EPUT provides diverse range of services across the Essex footprint, and beyond
- Therapeutic education department at the St Aubyn Centre Child and Adolescent Mental Health Unit in Colchester was recently rated Outstanding following an Ofsted inspection
- Celebrated National Apprenticeship Week in early February
- An EPUT healthcare assistant has been shortlisted in the national Health Hero Awards for work to tackle elder abuse
- Harlow College have a ward simulation area that students can use
- EPUT employment service has some of the best performance rates in the country
- Essex Mental Health Family Group Conferencing Service supports adults aged 18 to 65 who use secondary mental health services to build trusted support networks
- CQC are unlikely to visit again until all the actions on the action plan have been completed

- Recruitment strategy includes attracting students from local universities, a targeted recruitment campaign of people living locally and overseas recruitment (one-off approach)
- Apprentices are offered a substantive role upon completion of their qualification
- Have a good staff experience offer. Conscious during times of sustained pressure and scrutiny. Staff morale is improving, in part to improved vacancy rates
- Leadership visibility has increased and improved on inpatient wards
- Staff retention has improved
- Healthy partnership with Essex Police, working closely on right care, right place
- Obtain direct, in the moment feedback from patient's families.

Following discussion, the committee **resolved** the following actions:

- CQC action plan completion date to confirmed in writing
- Provide more detail on apprenticeship schemes, broken down into age range, job role and qualifications obtained.

## **5. Southend Neonatal Unit designation – Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting:

- Nicki Abbott, Interim Managing Director, Care Group 5 (women and children's services).

The committee received the following update and responses to their questions:

- Demand for neonatal capacity falls short of the resource available currently
- Proposal has been supported by all MSEFT meetings and board
- Difference between the levels is below:
  - Level 3 neonatal – most sick, premature babies born before 27 weeks or needing surgery
  - Level 2 neonatal – care for babies born above 27 weeks or not needing invasive care
  - Level 1 neonatal – care for babies born above 32 weeks not needing special care
- All neonatal units across MSE footprint are currently level 2
- Proposing to redesignate Southend neonatal unit to level 1
- Have determined pros and cons across all services to decide which unit they redesignate
- Informal feedback from families have been collected which was positive
- Believe it will enable the trust to provide safer care, and have engaged with stakeholders who are supportive of this change
- Will be seeking support from Southend City Council's People Scrutiny Committee next week
- Change has been in place for a year so there will not be a further review.

Following discussion, the committee **resolved** the following actions:

- The committee unanimously **resolved** to approve the redesignation of the Southend Neonatal unit as a level 1 SCBU (Special Care Baby Unit), with effect from 1 April 2024.

## **6. Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust Monthly Update**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting:

- Nicki Abbott, Interim Managing Director, Care Group 5 (women and children's services)

The committee received the following update and responses to their questions:

- Trust plans to have no more than 475 patients waiting over 62 days to start to receive treatment by the end of March 2024. At the end of January there were 747 patients waiting more than 62 days, down from 826 in December, which is 229 above the original 2023/24 plan
- National staff survey results have been received today which are positive in terms of staff retention.

Following discussion, the committee **resolved** the following actions:

- MSEFT vacancy rate data to be provided
- More detail on the issues around recruiting oncology consultants specifically at Southend hospital

## **7. Joint Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) - Essex, Southend, and Thurrock – Terms of Reference and Supplementary Guidance**

Members endorsed the Terms of Reference. Cllr Henry **proposed**, and Cllr Harris **seconded** the following members to represent ECC on the JHOSC:

- Cllr Anthony McQuiggan
- Cllr Mike Steptoe
- Cllr June Lumley
- Cllr Jeff Henry

Cllr Dave Harris and Cllr Ian Grundy were nominated as substitutes.

## **8. Chairman's Report – March 2024**

Members noted the report.

Cllr Harris informed the committee that the planned visit to the Elective Care Unit at Colchester Hospital is taking place on Wednesday 13 March 2024.

## **9. Member Updates – March 2024**

Members noted the report.

Cllr Steptoe provided an update to the Committee on the S106 Working Group.  
The groups final report will now be presented at the HOSC's April 2024 meeting.

**10. Work Programme – March 2024**

The committee noted the current work programme.

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

To note that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 4 April 2024 at 10:30am in Committee Room 1, County Hall.

**12. Urgent Business**

No urgent business has been received.

**13. Urgent Exempt Business**

No urgent exempt business has been received.

The meeting closed at 12:15pm.

**Chairman**