

AS MEETING INQUORATE THESE ARE NOTES AND NOT MINUTESTORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCILEXTERNAL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MEETINGTown Hall - Bridge Street, Bideford, EX39 2HSWednesday, 15 March 2023 - 6.00 pm

- PRESENT Councillor J Manley (Chair)
 Councillors S Harding, C Hawkins, S Langford and C Leather
- Independent Person L Bach
- ALSO PRESENT S Kearney - Head of Communities & Place
 T Vanstone - Senior Electoral & Democratic Services
 Officer
 K Hewlett - Electoral and Democratic Services Officer

185. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cottle-Hunkin, Councillor Pennington and Councillor Woodhouse, Kenton Baker (Non-Elected Member) and Staci Dorey (Head of Legal and Governance).

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Procedure Rule A4.3 of the Torridge District Council Constitution, the meeting was declared inquorate. Members in attendance remained to receive an update from NHS professionals.

186. UPDATE ON THE HEALTH TRUST INTEGRATION & OUR FUTURE HOSPITAL PROGRAMME

Chair introduced Katherine Allen (Director of Strategy) and Zahara Hyde (Director of Estate and Property), who thanked members for the invite to update on the Health Trust Integration and Our Future Hospital Programme.

The Director of Strategy provided a detailed update on the integration of the 2 Trusts. A presentation provided background to the rationale for the merger, confirmed what had been achieved so far and updated on the key achievements to date.

The Director of Estate and Property then provided an update in relation to the New Hospital Programme. A summary of the journey was provided, and the detail of the Strategic Outline Case was explained - including the reasoning for planned investment and the refurbishment and design plans. The progress and challenges experienced so far were then highlighted.

It was stated that the project was currently awaiting the outcome of Government discussions and it was hoped that detail on the level of investment would follow soon.

It was explained that the hospital site was a Cohort 4 project and pilot site on the new standardised design for NHS buildings, and what this meant in terms of the project. Members were provided with an overview of the previous 6 months, specifically work to align the merger of the Trusts with the planned New Hospital Programme. Community engagement work with One Northern Devon was also highlighted, as well as 2 recent capital investment projects at the hospital:

- Same Day Emergency Care opened in December 2022
- A new Discharge Lounge was scheduled for completion in March 2023.

Finally, it was expected that a new detailed outline business case would be needed in 2023.

Members were asked questions:

Following a query about the build programme it was confirmed that the planned date to break ground at the site – 2025 – had not changed and this would be a three-phase development, which would focus on redeveloping the hospital site and facilities. It was confirmed that all the work would be completed whilst the hospital remained operating and services to the public would be maintained throughout each phase.

Cllr Leather joined the meeting at 18:27

Following a question in relation to access to the site and whether there was potential to move to a more accessible location, it was confirmed that an options appraisal would consider this but within the financial envelope allocated nationally it would not be possible to construct a new hospital.

Members asked if there were any concerns regarding staffing at both hospitals. The Director of Strategy highlighted the benefits of being part of a university or teaching hospital and the resulting clinical trials and research that can come from this. However, the current challenges of marketing the hospital to potential staff in the current climate were noted.

There was a continued discussion on staffing and agency staff levels locally. It was confirmed that Devon's reliance on agency staff was proportionally higher than other areas and there is a continued aim to reduce the overall spend going forward. Members were advised that more detail on this could be shared following the meeting.

Members asked about the roll out of electronic recording keeping and how staff embraced the new systems. It was confirmed that North Devon had joined the RD&E systems in July 2022 and the transition had been positive. The benefits of the new system for clinicians and patients were highlighted, along with future

potential going forward. Later in discussion patient access to health care records was highlighted as one of the future benefits of a new digital system.

There was a query regarding the potential building work at North Devon and whether this would impact on where the location of appointments for the public. The Director of Estates & Facilities provided members with an overview of how the North Devon site would plan to manage the building work and maintain services for patients with minimal disruption.

Members asked about the future of Bideford Hospital, and it was confirmed that all the community hospitals are currently being reviewed as part of the Estate Strategy. The Estate survey of 2020-21 was highlighted, it was explained that this looked at the condition of community hospitals and the level of investment needed for them to be considered fit for purpose. Recent feedback from public health partners regarding the use of the community hospital sites was also mentioned and it was stated this would all be considered moving forward.

Members noted that the new trust was nearly 12 months old and that no CQC inspection had taken place yet. The CQC inspection from 2019 was mentioned, along with the areas that required improvement and it was asked if there was an update on these areas. The Director of Strategy responded and confirmed that the merger of the 2 trusts was in response to the CQC inspection of 2019.

Some of the improvements since 2019 and the trust merger were then highlighted, specifically the stabilisation of services was noted.

Members provided the speakers with some of the positive feedback they've received from staff and the public following the Trust merger.

Members then asked how the Committee could help. The Director of Estates & Facilities reminded members of the current delays to the New Hospital Programme and suggested that these concerns could be raised with the MP, along with a request for more clarity.

Members were also asked for their suggestions regarding community engagement work on the New Hospital Programme, specifically in terms of the proposals for the North Devon site. It was also suggested that this would be an opportunity to highlight the health and economic benefits of the programme to the public.

The Head of Community and Place highlighted the Area Advisory Groups to access Parish Councillors across the District and the North Devon Futures Programme and North Devon Housing Delivery were also suggested as groups that could provide strategic links.

Committee members agreed to write to the MP for Torridge and West Devon and reiterate concerns raised in the meeting regarding the New Hospital Programme.

The Chair thanked the Director of Strategy and the Director of Estates and Facilities for attending.

The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 6.57 pm