

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COIMMITTEE

SUBJECT: THE FUTURE OF QUEEN'S HOSPITAL

1. This report is submitted to Council at the request of the Chairman and with the support of the Members of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report aims to briefly update all Members on two recent reports that are likely to have a substantial impact on the future operation of Queen's Hospital and on the Committee's scrutiny of these areas. The first of these is the report of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) into the operation of the Barking, Havering and Redbridge Hospitals NHS Trust (BHRUT) which runs both Queen's Hospital and King George Hospital in Ilford. The second is the report of the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) in response to the referral to the Secretary of State by the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (as well as by those of neighbouring boroughs and by the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Outer North East London) of the Health for North East London proposals for changes to hospital and other healthcare arrangements in this region.
2. The CQC investigation concentrated on three areas – maternity, elective vascular surgery and emergency care. While concerns were found in all these areas as well as related areas such as records management and a lack of corporate leadership, the report makes clear that the largest area of concern remains maternity services. The CQC investigators list a series of long-standing problems in maternity at Queen's in particular including poor clinical care, a lack of managerial leadership and, perhaps most seriously, abusive behaviour by some staff to patients. The Committee's scrutiny of maternity services is ongoing and Members would like to inform Council that a recent inspection by the Committee of Queen's maternity showed evidence of a marked improvement in processes and in the "service" offered by the department. Although an announced visit, Members were given the opportunity to have full and frank discussions with both staff and patients in the department, virtually all of whom reported a highly positive and improved overall experience.
3. Other issues reported by the CQC included lengthy waits in A & E particularly during last winter's peak period and poor response to complaints. The Committee shares these concerns but also agrees with the CQC that improvements have been identified in a number of areas since the appointment in February this year of the new Trust Chief Executive. The Chairman and other Committee members have regular communication with the Chief Executive on both a formal and informal basis and have valued her honesty regarding the problems and challenges facing the Trust. Members also recently visited A&E at Queen's and held useful discussions with a consultant and nursing staff on duty. This

included an explanation of the rapid assessment and treatment system for major cases and the Committee is pleased that the CQC report has cited this as an example of improvement in quality. There are two outcomes in the CQC report which are yet to be reported upon – Outcome 6 – Co-operating with other providers and Outcome 7 – Safeguarding people from abuse. There is no timeline on when these aspects will be reported upon. The Committee intends, over the coming years, to continue to scrutinise A&E performance, including undertaking further site visits where appropriate.

- 4 Members of the Committee and of the Joint Health OSC gave detailed evidence to representatives of the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) during their investigation of the Health for North East London (H4NEL) proposals. The Panel has concluded that it broadly supports the implementation of the H4NEL proposals and whilst a time frame is not announced, the Panel supports urgent implementation. Most Members will be aware that the Secretary of State has ruled that the H4NEL proposals should not be implemented until the changes required by the CQC have been put in place at Queen's (and King George) Hospital and have been shown to work. Given the priority being given to implementing the CQC recommendations, no timescale for the H4NEL changes, including the closure of A&E and maternity units at King George Hospital, with the associated impact on Queen's, has yet been announced. NHS ONEL will be developing an action plan in consultation with key stakeholders with this work commencing before the end of 2011. It is expected that much of the implementation phase will be led by Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs).
- 5 The Committee is supportive of the IRP's view that improving patient experience must be at the forefront of the NHS' thinking. The Committee is also pleased that the IRP feels that further attention should be given to the scope of services provided at polyclinics, a point Members have repeatedly made to local NHS commissioners. The IRP also recommends that transport arrangements to hospitals and other medical facilities should be improved, with the NHS developing its own transport solutions where appropriate. This is an issue that has been repeatedly scrutinised at both Havering and Outer North East London levels and Members remain of the view that without significant transport improvements, the H4NEL reforms are unlikely to work. The Health OSC recently discussed this issue with the Council's transport planning officers and the Committee intends to continue to seek the best possible hospital transport arrangements for Havering residents.
- 6 The Committee will be arranging topic group meetings shortly in order to scrutinise with health officers the impact on Queen's Hospital of the CQC report and the latest position as regards the H4NEL proposals. It is planned in January for these issues to be also be discussed by the Joint Health OSC for Outer North East London and the chief executives of both BHRUT and NHS Outer North East London are expected to attend this meeting.

The Committee **RECOMMENDS that Council** note the current position with Queen's Hospital as outlined above and the work the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is planning to scrutinise these issues.