

---

**Select Committee on Good Health, 28th September 2005**

**Report of Head of Personnel and Support Services, Lead Officer for Health Scrutiny**

**Proposed Merger of Wolverhampton and Walsall Acute Hospital Trusts**

**Purpose of Report**

- 1 To inform members about preparations for the consultation process, due to begin in November 2005.

**Background**

- 2 The proposed consultation has been framed within the terms of the Black Country Review. The main aims and objectives of the Review are:
  - to assess the overall health needs and requirements of the Black Country population [in Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall] and what services are required;
  - to set out the long-term vision for the shape and standards of healthcare that the population of the Black Country needs from the health service;
  - to establish a process by which services can be re-designed to achieve that vision;
  - to set out some key challenges and standards for delivery of health services in the long term;
  - develop effective future models of service provision.

As yet no details about the merger proposals are available. The consultation is scheduled to begin in November and will last for three months.

**The Role of The Select Committee on Good Health**

- 3 Under the terms of The Local Authority (Overview and Scrutiny Committees Health Scrutiny Functions) Regulations 2002, the Select Committee on Good Health has to be consulted over any proposal for a substantial development or substantial variation in the provision of health services in the Dudley MBC area. If the Committee considers that a proposal would not be in the interests of the health service in Dudley it may refer the matter in writing to the Secretary of State, who may make the final decision.
  - Where a substantial development or variation concerns two or more Local Authorities, the Regulations provide for the creation of a Joint Scrutiny Committee to investigate the proposal and to make the decision about acceptance or rejection. The Joint Committee must exercise its functions subject to the such terms and conditions as the authorities may

consider appropriate. The Wolverhampton/Walsall proposed merger may involve as many as eight Local Authorities. It is important that representation from Local Authorities on the Joint Committee reflects the substantial nature of the change in each authority. It would not be reasonable for those Local Authorities where the impact of the changes would be minor to have equal representation on the Joint Committee with those Authorities where the impact will be major. The three Authorities where the impact is likely to be the greatest are Wolverhampton, Walsall and Dudley. There is no doubt that there will be a major impact on Wolverhampton and Walsall and it is relatively easy, even before the consultation proposal is published, to measure the effect. Dudley Group of Hospitals and the Primary Care Trusts are of the opinion that the changes to Dudley health services may well be major, although it is not very easy at present to estimate just how big the impact will be.

- In this case the Committee is recommended to seek equal representation with Wolverhampton and Walsall on the Joint Committee. An inter-Authority officer group is at present drawing up proposals for elected members to agree in respect of the working practices of the Joint Committee.
- There are other proposals in the offing that may cut across this particular consultation. The Government is due to publish its White Paper about health care outside hospital. Proposals within this may require changes in the proposals for Wolverhampton and Walsall. If Dudley Group of Hospitals succeeds in its application for foundation hospital trust status this, too, will have an effect but at present the exact nature of that cannot be measured.
- The Select Committee on Good Health should set up a joint working party with the NHS Trusts Social Services and the Patients' Forums to ensure that there is effective liaison.

### **Finance**

- 4 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report at this stage.

### **Law**

- 5 The relevant statutory provisions regarding the Council's Constitution are contained in Part 11 of the Local Government Act 2000, together with Regulations, Orders and Statutory Guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

### **Equality Impact**

- 6 This report complies with the Council's equality and diversity policy.

### **Recommendations**

- 7 It is recommended that :-
- The Select Committee on Good Health seeks equal representation with Wolverhampton and Walsall on the Joint Committee.

- The Select Committee on Good Health invites its NHS partners, Social Services and the Patients' Forums to form a working party immediately, to provide information and advice before and during the consultation period.
- The Select Committee nominates the Vice-Chairman, Cllr Mrs Faulkner, to act as a contact point between officers and the Committee during the preparation period before the start of the consultation.



.....  
**Steve Woodall**  
**Head of Personnel and Support Services.**  
**Lead Officer for Health Scrutiny.**

Contact Officer: Steve Woodall.  
01384 8154703  
steve.woodall@dudley.gov.uk

### **List of Background Papers**

No Background Papers.