

HEALTH SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel was held on 19 May 2004.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs H Pearson (In the Chair), Councillors Lancaster, Regan and K Walker.

OFFICIALS: J Bennington and T Gilling.

PRESENT BY INVITATION: Councillor B Thompson (Executive Member for Social Services and Health).

Prof. P Kelly, Dr P Haywood and Dr H Park (Middlesbrough PCT).

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, the Chair (Councillor Dryden) and Councillor McIntyre.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor B Thompson Middlesbrough PCT Personal Non Prejudicial Interest

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel held on 26 April 2004 were submitted and approved.

'CHOOSING HEALTH' – GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

As previously reported the Government had issued a major consultation document entitled 'Choosing Health' copies of which had been circulated to all Members of the Council and their views sought on the consultation.

The consultation process encompassed more than just treating people when they were ill but also of the fundamental importance of taking action to safeguard health and prevent problems before they occurred. The outcomes from the consultation would be incorporated into the new White Paper to be published in summer 2004 which would inform the Government Spending Review to set priorities and expenditure for 2005-2008.

The Government was seeking feedback on each of the questions contained in the consultation document to assist them to define the following in relation to public health:

- Defining roles and responsibilities
- Prioritise what should be done
- Engage all partners in improving health
- Establish a clear course of sustained action and evaluation.

Prof. Peter Kelly, Director of Health Improvement, Middlesbrough PCT reported upon the process so far and the wide range of consultation undertaken over a 7 week period culminating in a number of key elements to be incorporated in the PCT's response.

The Panel focussed on the following key areas identified by Middlesbrough PCT: -

- (a) In overall terms concern had been expressed that the wider issues of health inequalities in terms of how health related to general deprivation and poverty as demonstrated by recent indicators were not fully addressed;
- (b) Improved access to leisure facilities for children should be promoted such as the project organised and funded by Middlesbrough PCT for summer 2004 whereby free swimming would be available to children within the PCT area using the facilities at the Neptune, Coulby Newham, Acklam, and Eston;
- (c) The extension of the free school meals scheme had been suggested. In an endeavour to increase the opportunities to influence and introduce healthier choices of food for children at an earlier stage;
- (d) Greater emphasis should be placed on addressing the issues surrounding poor housing conditions both in the private and public sector especially in terms of the lack of adequate heating and insulation and the particular problems faced by elderly persons;
- (e) Reference was made to support across the UK and other countries for a ban on smoking in public places and reference was made by Members to the specific need to pursue joint initiatives aimed towards young persons;
- (f) It was considered that greater emphasis should be placed on understanding the issues surrounding Mental Health Services;
- (g) In terms of the processes the PCT had indicated that they were generally in favour of more closely shared indicators between major agencies with a view to enhancing the opportunity for more joint working;
- (h) The need for mainstream funding to be more proportionate to the level of need across the UK was strongly supported. In commenting on comparative statistics with Langbaugh, Hartlepool and North Tees it was noted that Middlesbrough was under-funded by £13m, which was more than the total of the other 3 areas. This was considered to be a huge challenge, which had to be addressed given the evidence that Middlesbrough had the greatest health need.

In addition to supporting the above comments, the Panel suggested that the following should be included in the response: -

- (i) improved health education on alcohol and greater enforcement of associated laws
- (ii) Sure Start be more universally available given the wide range of benefits as demonstrated from the evidence available.

AGREED as follows: -

1. That the representatives from Middlesbrough PCT be thanked for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.
2. That a response to the Government consultation document 'Choosing Health' be based on the issues outlined above and a copy circulated to Members of the Panel for their comments.

3. That a copy of the response be submitted to the next meeting of the Health Scrutiny Panel when consideration would be given to the Panel's draft Scrutiny Work Programme for 2004/2005.