

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

COUNCIL MEETING – 3 JULY 2013

Question by: Mr Graham Hodgkin

To: The Leader

QUESTION

“The JOHSC [Joint Overview Health Scrutiny Committee] report, drafted by the consultants appointed to support the committee, Peter Molyneux and Mark Butler concluded with:

'Our conclusion is that the consultation process has failed to meet the standards that should be expected for such important changes to service and local facilities, which potentially affect local people significantly'

The last 2 paragraphs of the DRAFT report concluded with these two paragraphs under the heading 'Remit for Consultation':

'Boroughs and third sector partners seem to have been largely ignored as sources of help and expertise in engaging with communities they know well. This may reflect the bulk of the budget being spent on expensive external communication and public relations experts rather than those with in nurturing sustainable local commitment and developing greater public involvement skills within the public sector.

A key concern is that virtually nothing of any significance about the proposals has altered over the nine months of development and engagement. This is not a sign of the strength of the proposals but an indication that a top-down, un-engaging process has been running. It is hard to avoid feeling that this has been an essentially closed NHS process, intended to promote a highly-developed proposal, rather than to engage meaningfully with the public and staff in shaping the future. Our conclusion is that the consultation process has failed to meet the standards that should be expected for such important changes to service and local facilities, which potentially affect local people significantly'.

Furthermore

"It has been widely publicised that NHS NW London spent £7m pounds on their public consultation "shaping a healthier future"

H&F council agreed in February 2013 to, amongst other proposals, to the demolishing of the 500 bed Charing Cross Hospital Major Hospital and replacing it with a 60 bed 'health and social care hospital'.

The concept 'health and social care hospital' does not appear anywhere in the consultation documents presented to the public and has no provenance or evidence of clinical efficacy or safety.

Under Section 242 of the NHS Act 2006 requires that those responsible for NHS services involve and engage patients and the public continually in the planning and development of those health services.

Furthermore;

'Section 242 (2) (b) of the Act imposes a duty on each body to which it applies, which includes PCTs, to consult persons to whom services are being or may be provided on "the development and consideration of proposals for changes in the way those services are provided".

Therefore the Public has not been consulted under Section 242 of the NHS Act 2006 as stated above.

The consultation is not the responsibility of H&F Council but by agreeing to the proposals implies that the council is satisfied with the consultation process.

Is the council satisfied?

If not are you going to tell the Independent Panel set up by the Health Minister, Jeremy Hunt?

Finally - Can you send copies of submissions made to Jeremy Hunt's Independent panel to Save Our Hospitals [Hammersmith] Campaign."

ANSWER

You are right to point out concerns with the original consultation – indeed we were one of the most ardent critics of the consultation process.

However, to be fair to the NHS the proposals for Charing Cross were changed as a result of feedback from the consultation, as a result of the campaign around the consultation.

As I have said before, there comes a point when we have to do more than shout the loudest. We felt it was far better to constructively work with the NHS to try and get the best possible deal for our residents.

Are we satisfied? We are happy that Charing Cross has been saved as viable hospital, we are happy that the majority of everyday health services will still continue to be available but we are continuing to talk to the NHS and all healthcare providers to maximise the services that will be available – accepting the growing clinical evidence which suggests that specialists centres of care save lives.

We will be making every effort to put the case for more services, including enhanced emergency cover at Charing Cross, to the Independent Panel. At the moment the Independent Panel has made it clear that they are only interested in speaking to clinicians. We hope that will change and we will be pressing to make a submission which we will, of course, make public.