

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY REVIEW - THE LAURELS HEALTHY LIVING CENTRE THURSDAY, 13 NOVEMBER 2008

Councillors Alexander, Bull (Chair), Vanier and Wilson

LC1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (IF ANY)

None.

LC2. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

LC3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

LC4. THE LAURELS PMS PRACTICE – PROPOSAL BY HARINGEY TPCT TO DEVELOP SERVICES

David Lyons, the Head of Primary Care (East) from Haringey TPCT reported that the Laurels practice had been chosen as the location for the GP led Health Centre as it already fulfilled some of the necessary criteria. In particular, it already had more than 6000 patients on its books. There was a project group, including all relevant services, that was working together to develop services at the Centre. The advertising process for a suitable provider for the services at the Centre had already begun and there had been 32 expressions of interest to date. There has been significant interest from local GP practices as well as some from the independent sector.

Consultation was currently taking place with local residents and the TPCT was committed to involving them throughout the procurement process. Meetings had taken place but there had been some administration problems in getting notifications out in good time. Invitations and questionnaires had been sent out to all patients.

Feedback from questionnaires showed that the top priorities of residents were:

- Extended hours
- Extension of diagnostic services
- Wider range of treatments.

The Panel received the views of local residents present at the meeting, including representatives from the Save St Ann's Campaign and the Laurels Action Group. The following issues were raised:

- Concern was expressed at the possibility of a large impersonal private company gaining the contract.
- The Laurels was not ideally situated for a centre of this nature as it did not have good public transport links
- The design of the building was not sympathetic to the local environment

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- People had not been given a reasonable time to respond to the TPCT's proposals. Despite the large percentage of local residents that were from black and ethnic minority communities (55%), translated versions of information that had been circulated had not been made available
- Privatisation would threaten the quality of services and the relationship between patients and their GP. People preferred the traditional method of GPs running their own services.
- They did not believe that the TPCT was under a legal obligation to go out to tender.
- It was felt that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should designate the change as a substantial variation or development to services and therefore subject to statutory consultation.

Mr Lyons responded that the TPCT had not yet invited bids to be made. It was currently in the process of developing the specification. All that had been done to date was to invite expressions of interest. The evaluation of bids would not be made on cost alone. He hoped that local GP practices would be able to put in high quality bids for the contract. The TPCT had the chance to weight particular factors in the evaluation of bids and quality of service and awareness of the health needs of the local population were likely to be key criteria. As the Laurels was opposite St. Ann's hospital, it was as accessible as it is to local residents.

He accepted that, in hindsight, parts of the consultation could have been done better. In particular, notification of the consultation meetings had gone out later than intended. A change of provider was not in itself sufficient for something to be considered to be a substantial variation to services. The deadline for when the Centre was expected to be operational was 1 April 2009. This had been externally imposed. It was unlikely that this would now be met although it was hoped to have a signed contract in place by then. Following this, there would need to be a preparatory period for, amongst other things, the successful bidder to recruit staff.

At the moment, the specification covered the basic services that had to be provided by all the centres and nothing additional had yet been added in. The basic services included the Centre being open from 8:00 a.m. till 8:00 p.m. every day of the year and being open to both registered and unregistered patients. Additions to these services were a matter for local determination and were currently being consulted upon. It was intended to recruit one or two local residents to participate in the procurement process and evaluation of bids.

Information had not been sent out to residents in community languages. This had been done on the advice of relevant TPCT directors and door to door consultations undertaken by the TPCT were done in English. The majority of demand for translations was for Kurdish and Asian languages and, to a lesser extent, Polish and Somali.

Councillor Harris outlined his concerns as a local ward Councillor. He felt that health services, as a public service, should be accountable and run in the interests of the community. Service providers needed to have an understanding of the needs of the area. The Laurels had been built using public money and there was concern that

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private contractors would “cherry pick” potentially lucrative contracts for short term gain and walk away in the event of there being any problems. There was a lot of local opposition to the plans and it was felt that the consultation was seriously flawed. For example, there had been a lack of involvement of local ward Councillors.

The Panel noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had already determined that the proposal did not constitute a substantial variation to services as they were not of such a scale as to justify this. However, the Committee could still comment on the proposed changes and their implications through its general powers under the health scrutiny legislation.

The Panel felt that additional consultation needed to be arranged with local people to ensure that they all got the opportunity to put their views forward. It was agreed with the TPCT that:

- Further meetings would be arranged in week commencing 1 December 2008.
- Translations of information would be made available in the top four local community languages
- Members of the Panel and ward Councillors would be invited to attend the consultation meetings
- A tour of the Laurels would be arranged for all Members of the Panel

In addition, the Panel agreed to meet again in week commencing 8 December.

LC5. NEW ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

None.

Cllr Gideon Bull
Chair