

## EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

### PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE – 12 NOVEMBER 2009

Present: Councillor B Mainstone (Chairman)  
Councillor B Gillbard (Vice Chairman)  
Councillor L Marmara (Town Mayor)  
Councillors Mrs Waddingham  
Councillors Johnson and Joyce-Nelson

Also present: A representative of East Grinstead Courier & Observer.

#### 167 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There being no public questions Members moved on to the next item of business at 7.46 p.m.

168 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Barnett, Mrs Bennett, Mrs Collins DL, Dixon and Quinn. Councillor Baldwin, although not a Member of the Committee, had planned to attend but was unable to do so due to work commitments and asked for his apologies to be recorded.

#### 169 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2009, having been previously circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

#### 170 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF PREJUDICIAL AND PERSONAL INTEREST

- \* Councillors Johnson and Mainstone disclosed personal interests in Performance Indicators: Concessionary Rail Passes (min.176) as holders of a senior rail pass and Councillor Mrs Waddingham disclosed a personal interest in the same item as a holder of a disabled persons rail pass.
- \* Councillors Gillbard and Joyce-Nelson disclosed personal interests in Choice Based Lettings (min.173) and Car Parking Issues (min.174) as elected Members of Mid Sussex District Council.
- \* Councillor Mainstone disclosed a personal interest in Estcots Primary School (min.177) as an employee of West Sussex County Council.

#### 171 PRESENTATION ON THE SOUTH EAST COAST AMBULANCE SERVICE NHS TRUST

The Chairman was pleased to introduce Louise Hutchinson, Head of Patient Experience with South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Trust (SECAmb), who had kindly agreed to speak about the Trust and the service they provide.

Ms Hutchinson explained that SECAmb was formed on 1st July 2006 following the merger of Kent, Surrey and Sussex Ambulance Trusts. They employ over 3,000 staff across more than 65 sites. Around 85% of the work force is operational, working with patients either face to face in the field or over the telephone.

The Trust provides their services across the whole of the South East Coast region – Kent, Surrey, Sussex and parts of North East Hampshire and Berkshire. Within the region there are 8 Primary Care Trusts, 12 Acute Hospital Trusts and 4 Mental Health and Specialist Trusts.

The Trust responds to 999 calls from the public, responds to urgent calls from health care professionals such as GPs and provides non-emergency patient transport services in Kent and Sussex. The Trust covers an area of 3,600 square miles and a population of about 4.5million. Every minute an emergency call is answered by one of the Trust's three control rooms – more than 645,000 emergency and urgent calls in 2008/2009. In the same year they undertook over 445,000 patient transport service journeys.

The Trust hears, sees and treats a diverse range of patients every day. Patients range from critically ill and injured to those who have less serious conditions or routine transport needs.

Ms Hutchinson said that there are three categories of 999 calls. Category A is immediately life threatening, which includes patients who are not breathing, are unconscious, have chest pain, are choking, or have uncontrolled bleeding. An ambulance must reach those patients within 8 minutes on 75% of occasions and within 19 minutes on 95% of occasions in order to meet the Government standard and the Trust succeeded in this in the past year. For category B calls, which are regarded as serious, this includes patients who have taken an overdose and are conscious, diabetic and conscious, have been in a road traffic accident but are not Category A patients, have abdominal pain or have controlled bleeding. The standard to be met for Category B calls is 95% reached within 19 minutes and the Trust missed out on this target by less than 1% in the previous year. Category C calls are regarded as non-serious and include falls, back pain, fainting, headache or sickness from an unknown cause. Although there is no national time target for Category C calls, the Trust's own target is to provide a response within 30 minutes. It was explained that the Trust has a further triage system for certain Category C calls, whereby the caller is passed to the clinical telephone advice desk and asked further questions. This may result in a paramedic practitioner being sent to assess or treat, or perhaps a diabetic or asthma nurse where appropriate, which may avoid an unnecessary hospital admission for the patient.

Ms Hutchinson said that SECAmb's vision is to "match and exceed international excellence through embracing innovation and putting the patient at the heart of everything we do". This is achieved through adoption of principles of high performance, which include reliability on response times, customer satisfaction, clinical effectiveness and economic efficiency.

Members were advised that SECAmb hopes to be authorised as a Foundation Trust from August 2010 and it was explained that this would help to achieve the vision of becoming a world class ambulance service, will provide enhanced local accountability, will give Foundation Trust members a recognised voice in decision making and future planning services, and give more freedoms away from the Department of Health, including relating to care and finance. In this regard the likely breakdown of the Council of Governors was also explained.

At this juncture the Chairman asked Members if they had any questions. Councillor Johnson noted that there seems to be a developing ethos about not taking people to hospital if not required and looking at other care solutions. Ms Hutchinson agreed that this is the case but said that in all circumstances the Trust will err on the side of

caution and that ambulance staff must document their reasoning and actions should a patient not be conveyed to hospital.

Councillor Johnson said that there are local worries about the geography for East Grinstead and proximity to centres that can adequately deal with patients who have had strokes or brain injuries. He was told that distance and time is a real issue. In this regard the Trust is working with the Stroke Association. Ms Hutchinson said it is important to get the patient scanned and treatment commenced quickly as urgent remedial action is critical. If a patient can be scanned and then thrombolysed within three hours in the case of a clot-based stroke, the level of residual disability may be drastically reduced. Such services need to be available 24/7 if possible and there are now many more hospitals within the Trust's area able to provide such services than there were just a year ago, and the hours during which the treatment is available are also increasing.

Councillor Mrs Waddingham asked whether it is the condition of the patient that determines to which hospital an ambulance takes them. Ms Hutchinson said for East Grinstead the most appropriate accident and emergency is usually East Surrey, although minor injuries can be dealt with at the Queen Victoria Hospital. Some people might be taken to the Princess Royal Hospital, but that hospital does not take trauma patients, those patients who may require surgery, or children. She said that where the request for an ambulance had been made by a GP, the GP might on occasion specify that the patient be taken to the Kent and Sussex Hospital. Information obtained from the patient, such whether they have been recently treated at a particular hospital for the same complaint, may also be a factor, and in some cases, for example if the patient is roughly equidistant from two hospitals, personal choice can be taken into account.

Councillor Mrs Waddingham asked how many ambulances there are in the Trust area. She was told there is one based at East Grinstead, which is operational 24 hours around the clock. Further support has recently been provided in the form of an ambulance car, which is currently available 12 hours a day and ambulances, strategically located at response posts may also come in from Crawley and other locations to supplement. In this regard it was noted that two vehicles would normally be sent to a cardiac arrest patient. Ambulances are constantly moving around to ensure the most effective utilisation.

Councillor Mrs Waddingham also mentioned the North East Review. This recognised the increasing importance of cars with paramedics and she welcomed this and wondered if this was the view of the Trust also. She was advised in the affirmative. It was emphasised that personnel are always trained.

Councillor Mainstone asked about the Air Ambulance Service within the Trust area. He was told that there are two helicopters provided by Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance Trust, which are based in Marden, Kent and Dunsfold, Surrey, and that in Sussex SECamb pay towards the use of the Sussex Police helicopter, based in Shoreham, all of which have SECamb paramedics on board. It was mentioned that only the Police helicopter can fly around the clock and that the others are limited to daytime use.

Finally, Councillor Gillbard asked whether the Trust provides feedback forms for completion by patients and was advised in the negative. Patient details are manually recorded by the crew on the patient clinical record (or PCR). There is no way of mail merging this and the Trust does not know the outcomes of patients after they have delivered them to hospital. Customer feedback has been undertaken through Mori. It was suggested that the Trust could look to co-operate with each hospital's own

feedback form to ensure provision of some useful information. He also asked whether ambulances are fitted with GPS and was advised yes.

At the end of the question and answer session the Chairman thanked Louise Hutchinson for the quality of her presentation and the helpful way she had answered questions and Members duly gave her a round of applause.

172 POLICING ISSUES IN EAST GRINSTEAD (Min 101 10.9.09)

Committee noted the Town Clerk's report. They commented favourably about the continuing downward trend in crime in East Grinstead, which they felt reflected well on Sussex Police locally. Members said that they were very much looking forward to meeting Inspector Scott at the Council meeting on 7th December.

Some Members referred to comments made by Mr Gillett to the East Grinstead Courier and Observer, as published 5th November 2009. They said to draw parallels between local anti-social behaviour and that experienced in London and part of Kent and Essex was nonsensical and showed complete lack of knowledge of the Town and the way it is policed. They also objected to his comments regarding the state of the local economy and commented favourably that a new shoe shop is in the process of opening and that work has now commenced on the Aldi store. Furthermore it was noted that the former Woolworths site has now been sub-divided and Members presumed that the building is likely, at least in part, to be reopened in the near future.

173 MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL – CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

Members noted the content of the report prepared by the Town Clerk. Councillor Gillbard explained the background to the change being introduced to the lettings system and showed a range of publicity literature, which had been produced by Mid Sussex District Council working with Affinity Sussex. He and other Members thought that the new arrangements would be better and fairer. It was noted that the new system could be accessed on-line.

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Clerk be requested to write to Mid Sussex District Council commending them on the new Choice Based Lettings arrangement and asking them to ensure that not only applicants with local connections to Mid Sussex should have priority over those who do not, but also all things being equal, priority should be given to residents of one of the towns or villages on the list over and above that local connection in order to reinforce local community roots and cohesion.

174 MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL CAR PARKING ISSUES (Min 103 10.9.09)

Members gave detailed consideration to the report, which the Town Clerk had prepared for them at their request, focusing upon East Grinstead car parks income and usage for the first six months of 2009/2010 financial year. Members had requested this due to their concerns that the charges introduced by Mid Sussex District Council, which took effect in April 2009, had had a severely detrimental effect on usage and income and as Members wished to understand the figures in detail.

Members noted that East Grinstead's income for the first six months of the financial year was some £29,000 less than it had been in the equivalent period in the previous financial year. This was particularly illuminating, as the charges had increased significantly, particularly for longer stay periods at the commencement of the financial year. Members observed, however, that the reality of what was happening

on the ground, with consumer resistance and parking in residential roads, was only what Town Councillors had predicted when they had first commented on the proposed changes to charges prior to their introduction. In particular the almost complete collapse of car park usage for four hour plus periods was clearly evident and nowhere was this greater than in Chequer Mead. However, Members also observed that car parks such as Railway Approach, which can be considered to be a commuter car park due to its proximity to the railway station, had also seen a significant decline.

Whilst it was observed that the situation in Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath was marginally better than East Grinstead, even there it was noted that the small increase in income year on year was still only 25% of what had been predicted by the District Council when they introduced their charges. It was felt that the main variants between the Towns were because East Grinstead has CPZ controlled parking and other Towns do not.

Members said that there are still concerns at the impact that the charges have had on local traders and that the promised review by Mid Sussex District Council must be root and branch and there must be real and constructive engagements with the Town Council and business associations. Councillor Gillbard advised that Mid Sussex District Council has engaged consultants to undertake this review and Members expressed the view that this should be comprehensive and look not only at charges but also the car park machines and the means of operation.

Specifically, Members noted that this Christmas will be particularly difficult for local businesses and traders and this will be a common experience in all three Towns. They felt that businesses need some sort of uplift to help them through the festive period and hoped that Mid Sussex District Council would feel it appropriate to undertake some form of initiative, either free parking for a set day or days or reduced charges, to demonstrate their commitment to the economic well being of the three Towns and District generally. Accordingly it was

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk be asked to write to the Head of Service (with a copy to the appropriate Cabinet Member) requesting that Mid Sussex District Council do consider an economic development initiative in the weeks prior to Christmas which might entail free parking at certain times and/or discounted parking charges, all with a view to creating the right business conditions to enable local businesses to prosper in all three Towns within Mid Sussex District.

175 GATWICK AIRPORT NOISE ACTION PLAN (Min 102 10.9.09)

Committee noted the Town Clerk's report and the actions that had been undertaken under delegated powers since the previous meeting of the Committee.

Members supported the actions taken and expressed their gratitude to Councillors Mrs Collins and Mrs Brunson and the Town Clerk.

176 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – CONCESSIONARY RAIL PASSES (Min 105 10.9.09)

Members noted details of concessionary rail passes issued in East Grinstead for August, September and October 2009.

177 ESTCOTS COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Members noted details of plans for a major redevelopment programme at Estcots County Primary School for which funding has been identified within the 2009/2010 capital programme.

Members looked briefly at the plans prepared by West Sussex County Council and noted that a formal consultation is likely to be held, probably early in the new year prior to the submission of a planning application. Members recorded their thanks to Councillors Mrs Brunsdon and Quinn for drawing Members' attention to this matter and agreed to note for the time being.

The meeting closed at 9.29 p.m.

SIGNED:

CHAIRMAN