



Report to Cabinet

Subject Public Service Restructuring

Date 6th October 2005

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At the meetings of the Cabinet held on 8th September and 22nd September 2005, the Leader referred to the proposed restructuring of the Primary Care Trusts in Nottinghamshire and the fact that the option which appeared to be emerging as the preferred option was for Nottinghamshire to be covered by two Primary Care Trusts – one covering the area of the City and the other covering the area of the Shire County. The proposals are to be the subject of a consultation process, but this is to be completed in time for any new structure to be settled upon and put in place by October 2006.

This change is intended to coincide with the introduction of 'practice based commissioning' (PBC) throughout the NHS. We have been advised that the Gedling PCT is supporting the preferred option and is pressing for Gedling Primary Care Practices to be invited to join in a 'pan-Gedling PBC grouping that would allow risk sharing of their budget and ... require a central resource to service the commissioning work, reconciling the referrals with the payments that the Trusts demand and basically providing the equivalent of Commissioning Managers' (this quote is taken from a Gedling PCT communication). The suggestion is that this would also include the option to pool some of the practice management functions such as payroll and procurement of supplies, as well as dealing with governance and probity issues and help to secure the continued provision of those services which have been established on a joint basis with other agencies, such as Positive Moves. The communication goes on to suggest that 'what is emerging is something like a mini-mixture of the current PCT Board, PEC and the GP Board to supervise the Gedling Commissioning cluster and the infrastructure servicing it'.

Further information and formal consultation on these proposals is awaited and will be reported when it is received.

At much the same time, the Home Secretary has announced the publication of a review by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary of the structure of police forces in England and Wales which has concluded that 'the 43 force structure is no longer fit for purpose' and that it should be changed. The overall conclusion is

that smaller police forces do not provide a sufficient critical mass to provide the necessary sustainable level of protective services and that without reform this situation is likely to worsen (some commentators, of course, have made similar comments about the viability of smaller District Councils). Their recommendation accordingly is that police forces should move towards a more 'strategic' organisation, coupled with a strengthening of the neighbourhood policing role performed by the basic command unit (BCU). The report points out that 'the BCU as an operating platform is tried and tested' and that as a result of this it should be possible to move towards a more resilient strategic structure without undermining local policing and successful crime reduction. It also suggests that "the net present value of merger savings and productivity gains could amount to £2,250 million".

The Home Secretary has endorsed the HMICs findings and has invited the police service to come forward by the end of December 2005 with firm proposals for force restructuring in each region, taking into account criteria such as size of force, geography, criminal markets and coterminosity with local government. The expectation is that this will in practice lead to mergers of some forces. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has apparently advised that there are no current plans for local government reform, but that this could change and that they would therefore stress the importance of coterminosity.

Within the East Midlands, a team has been set up to lead the process of identifying options and coming up with a proposal and a timetable has been agreed which will lead to an initial option appraisal and a proposed shortlist of options for further examination being completed by the end of October. This matter was referred to the Gedling Community Safety Partnership Strategic Group meeting held on 27th September 2005 and the police authority and the police force locally have confirmed that they will do everything they can to keep us informed and to involve us in the process.

Members may also be aware that the Minister for Communities and Local Government also announced in September that he has postponed reform of local government finance and the council tax revaluation until consideration has been given to the functions and future role of local government, on the basis that 'it would be sensible to postpone revaluation until it can be included in a wider package of fundamental reform'. We have previously reported to Cabinet on consultation papers which have been received from the Government dealing with a range of issues concerned with local government. It is understood that the ODPM intends to issue further papers dealing in particular with issues such as neighbourhood and community empowerment some time next year, which have an interesting resonance given the emphasis mentioned above on practice based commissioning in the Health Service and neighbourhood policing through the BCU structures in the police service.

All of these issues plainly have far reaching implications for public services in Gedling, joint work undertaken by the various agencies working in the Borough and services provided on a joint basis, as well as potentially for the Council itself. Further reports will be presented as more details emerge of proposals in the various areas of review. Given the very tight timescales involved, it will be difficult to secure full Cabinet involvement at every stage, but it will be important to ensure that all Members are kept informed and that we are in a position to

respond effectively to any consultation and to engage as actively as possible with the process. I would suggest that a copy of this report is referred to Scrutiny Chairs in order that they might consider whether and to what extent the Scrutiny Committees should be involved.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note this report and to agree that it be referred to Scrutiny Chairs for their consideration.