



**Committee and Date**

**Joint Health Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

**28 March 2022**

**Item**

**Public**

**Proposal for scrutiny of primary care**

**Responsible officer**

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**1.0 Summary**

1.1 This report provides a draft proposal for the scrutiny of primary care services in Shropshire.

**2.0 Recommendations**

2.1 Members to:

- confirm the scope and approach for this work and
- identify further lines of enquiry for the work to pursue.

**REPORT**

**3.0 Risk assessment and opportunities appraisal**

3.1 Good scrutiny can add value to the commissioning process for primary care. It provides public accountability for strategy, allows elected member to reflect the voices of their communities, and provides an opportunity for elected members to develop strong partnership working relationships with officers in partner agencies.

3.2 Scrutiny can also provide an opportunity for elected members to develop their understanding of policy and practice, which in turn strengthens their community leadership role.

3.3 Weak scrutiny risks poor use of resources and can weaken working relationships between officers and elected members.

**4.0 Financial implications**

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any policy recommendations arising from this report would be subject to financial assessment before being considered by a decision-making body such as Cabinet or Council.

**5.0 Climate change appraisal**

5.1 There are no climate change implications arising from considering this report.

**6.0 Background**

6.1 At a recent planning meeting, members of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to set out a plan of work to scrutinise primary care services in Shropshire.

6.2 An outline plan is attached as appendix 1.

**6.0 Additional information**

<b>List of background papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b>
<b>Cabinet member (portfolio holder)</b>  All
<b>Local member</b>  All
<b>Appendices</b> <b>Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Scrutiny of primary care – a proposal</b>

## **Appendix 1**

### **Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny of primary care – a proposal**

#### **Introduction**

The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has identified scrutinising primary care in Shropshire as a priority for its work in 2022 and 2023. Primary Care, as defined by the NHS, provides “the first point of contact in the healthcare system, acting as the ‘front door’ of the NHS. Primary care includes general practice, community pharmacy, dental, and optometry (eye health) services.”

In recent years the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has looked at different aspects of primary care within Shropshire, usually in response to a specific issue or concern such as the closure of a GP surgery. When it does this, the committee is generally hampered by two conflicting demands; the need to scrutinise a particular topic in detail and the wish to consider a specific topic in its broader context. For example, it is difficult to scrutinise worsening ambulance response times without also considering processes at hospitals with accident and emergency units.

The Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is also hampered by a failure to receive supporting information that would assist it to meaningfully scrutinise performance. For example, it has tried to scrutinise performance within SaTH’s hospitals without receiving any performance information from the trust. In part, this is because some NHS officers do not wish to share documents that may then be published as part of the scrutiny process.

Finally, although the committee has had some success in engaging with senior officers in the NHS in private briefings around primary and urgent care, this has not always resulted in effective scrutiny in public meetings, as officers are frequently less candid in meetings that take place in public.

In order to overcome these difficulties, and in order to scrutinise the complex topic of primary care meaningfully, local authority officers have worked with the current director of primary care at Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group to propose a series of briefings and committee meetings to provide elected members with the knowledge and resources they require.

#### **Objectives**

We propose the following draft objectives for this review:

- To gain a comprehensive understanding of how primary care is funded, contracted and managed.
- To understand the limitations and challenges of providing primary care in Shropshire, particularly in rural and remote locations.
- To identify opportunities to deliver primary care more effectively

- To also identify opportunities for the local authority and other agencies to contribute to the development of primary care services.

## **Methodology**

In order to provide elected members with the information and understand they require to be able to scrutinise primary care meaningfully, we propose a series of informal briefing sessions in advance of the meeting itself. These briefings will explain three important strands of primary care; contracting, workforce and networks.

- **Primary Care Contracting**
  - The contract for the CCG to provide primary care on behalf of the NHS.
  - Contracting arrangements with the 51 GP practices.
- **Primary Care Workforce**
  - The changing nature of the healthcare workforce
  - Workforce shortages
  - Using technology to deliver services
    - Opportunities
    - Challenges
- **Primary Care Networks**
  - Purpose of the networks
  - Funding

## **Timescale**

The Clinical Commissioning Group is currently restructuring its workforce as it evolves into the Integrated Care System. This means that the officers who would prepare this work for the committee will not necessarily be in post by the time the committee carried out the work. The proposal therefore is to begin the briefing sessions in late June, following the establishment of the Integrated Care System. The three briefing sessions will take place online and will not be open to the public.

- Briefing on primary care contracting: June 2022 (online)
- Briefing on primary care workforce: July 2022 (online)
- Briefing on primary care networks: August 2022 (online)
- Scrutiny of primary care: September 2022 (committee meeting in public)