

Dear Cllrs.,

I am writing on behalf of SELSON, a group of health campaigners with representatives from each of the 6 South East London (SEL) boroughs, to express our concerns about the lack of proper public scrutiny of the SEL Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the SEL Integrated Care System (ICS).

We welcomed the establishment of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) as a sector level panel to scrutinise the then SEL Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) and the Joint CCG Committee. Indeed the JHOSC did some valuable work in questioning plans to centralise Elective Orthopaedic procedures in SEL. However it is fair to say that the JHOSC had hardly got into its stride when the NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) was launched in Jan. 2019.

Since then the JHOSC has met only on Sept. 2019. At that meeting with regard to the CCG system reform, the Committee requested that the process be slowed down to enable proper scrutiny to be carried out. It was agreed that a letter be sent to NHS England to express the Committee's concern and it was agreed that a joint workshop be held before the Committee's next meeting to consider future scrutiny arrangements. It is not clear if these actions remain outstanding; however, before the JHOSC was to meet again in Sept. 2020, the SEL CCGs merged (Apr. 2020) and the SEL STP morphed into the SEL ICS, all done with minimal public consultation. With the arrival of COVID 19 in spring 2020, the government abandoned all pretence of democratic accountability. And then a long awaited JHOSC meeting was scheduled for the 2nd. Sept. As was the previous practice, SELSON submitted questions to the meeting and much to our disappointment these were not only not taken but never acknowledged at all.

The meeting was obviously handicapped by the problems with the technology but also by the absence of a number of members and the long time gap since the previous meeting which resulted in a lack of continuity. In addition, the merger of the SEL CCGs, the establishment of Borough Based Boards and the SEL ICS, plus COVID have made it difficult for members to keep abreast with developments and they were clearly desperate for information to pass on to residents. Thus the meeting became an information exchange event which is not what scrutiny should be.

We noted the Chair's request that the terms of references will be revised to reflect the new circumstances and ask if - as part of this exercise - consideration could be given to the following points:

- (1) incorporating a time for members of the public to ask questions at each JHOSC meeting
- (2) whether there is (or could be) a protocol for issues raised at borough scrutiny meetings and considered urgent to be escalated to sector level, and ad hoc meetings of JHOSC called to address the issues concerned.
- (3) the long time between each JHOSC meeting (next meeting to take place in Dec) results in lack of continuity. Thus ideally JHOSC meetings should be scheduled at the end of each cycle of scrutiny and health meetings i.e. meetings of borough scrutiny committees, BBBs, CCG, H&W Boards and ICS Boards so that all members can be advised on issues causing concern.
- (4) Meetings should be held outside of normal working hours so that all members are available to attend
- (5) JHOSC members represent different political views.... but if scrutiny is based on agreed principles then it could be effective despite political differences. For example, issues could be scrutinised on the basis of deterioration in service, quality of service, patient safety, equality, value for money, access to service, accountability and so on.

It was reassuring to note that some of the above points are incorporated in the Effective Scrutiny Guidelines which were included in the papers for the Lewisham Council Healthier Communities Select Committee meeting on the 23rd Sept. We presume similar documents are produced by the other 5 SEL councils.

SELSON meets regularly with campaigners from the other 4 London ICS areas to discuss the effectiveness of current scrutiny arrangements and other issues. We hope that our combined efforts will contribute to ensuring that the level of public scrutiny of health services across the capital is that which our residents need and deserve.

Yours.....