

**NORFOLK AND WAVENEY INTEGRATED CARE BOARD CONSULTATIONS ON CHANGES TO THE OUT OF HOURS GP SERVICE, NORWICH WALK-IN CENTRE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS SERVICE**

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<p>The Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board is undertaking a public consultation on possible changes to the Out of Hours GP Service (which at present has bases in Fakenham and North Walsham); the Norwich Walk-In Centre and Vulnerable Adults Service.</p> <p>As a key local stakeholder the District Council is invited to comment on the options detailed in the consultation documents – the end date for comments being 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025.</p>
<b>Options considered</b>	The Committee is invited to review and comment upon the service reconfiguration proposals detailed in the Integrated Care Board’s consultation documents as they relate to possible future service changes in North Norfolk.
<b>Consultation(s)</b>	In this matter the District Council is a local stakeholder in respect of a consultation being undertaken by the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to discuss and comment on the proposals outlined in the Norfolk and Waveney ICB public consultation documents, with the Committee’s views forming the Council’s corporate response to the consultation.</b>
<b>Reasons for recommendations</b>	To speak up for the retention of public services across the extensive rural geography of North Norfolk, so that our residents are not unduly disadvantaged in being able to access services, in this case, primary health care services, relative to the wider population.
<b>Background papers</b>	<p>Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board consultation documents attached as appendices to this report.</p> <p>Appendix 1 – Changes to General Practice consultation  Appendix 2 – GP Out of Hours data pack  Appendix 3 – Norwich Walk-in Centre data pack  Appendix 4 – Vulnerable Adults Service consultation</p>

<b>Wards affected</b>	All
<b>Cabinet member(s)</b>	Cllr Liz Withington, Cabinet portfolio holder for Health and Wellbeing
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**Links to key documents:**

Corporate Plan:	<p>Theme:- Developing our Communities</p> <p>Objectives:-</p> <p>Promote health, wellbeing and independence for all; and Increase Accessibility and Inclusion for All</p> <p>Action:-</p> <p>With local partners we will continue to lobby for the retention and development of innovative health and social care facilities for older people in the District, including the re-opening of the Benjamin Court NHS asset in Cromer, reflecting the district's aged demographic – the oldest average age in the country. (Retained and carried forward as an amended action from the 2024/25 AAP.)</p>
Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	No direct impact on the Council's budget or Medium-Term Financial Strategy
Council Policies & Strategies	Corporate Plan objectives of advocating for the provision of good quality public services for the district's residents

<b>Corporate Governance:</b>	
Is this a key decision	No
Has the public interest test been applied	Yes – there is no private or confidential information to be considered by this report.
Details of any previous decision(s) on this matter	N/A

## **1. Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 This report invites the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and comment upon proposals outlined as the basis for consultation by the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board with respect to possible changes to the Out of Hours GP Service (which at present has bases in Fakenham and North Walsham), the Norwich Walk-In Centre and Vulnerable Adults Service.
- 1.2 Any comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will form the Council's formal response to the consultation process.

## **2. Introduction & Background**

- 2.1 On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 the District Council was invited (along with other key local stakeholders and the general public) by the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board to comment on proposals made through a formal consultation process to potential changes to the Norfolk and Waveney Out of Hours GP Service (which at present has bases in Fakenham and North Walsham); the

Norwich Walk-In Centre and Vulnerable Adults Service. The consultation runs until 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

- 2.2 Details of the consultation (four documents) are attached as an appendix to this report for members information.
- 2.3 With previous commitments to developing the Council's response to proposals for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, officers have had limited time to consider and prepare a draft response to this consultation by the Integrated Care Board and so the consultation documents are provided in full, with the Committee invited to comment in respect of the proposals being considered.

### **3. The consultation proposals:-**

#### **3.1 Out of Hours GP service:-**

- 3.1.1 The Norfolk and Waveney Out of Hours GP service includes elements of the service being delivered from bases at Fakenham and North Walsham.
- 3.1.2 Information provided in the consultation documents suggest that the numbers of patients seen at the Fakenham base have dropped significantly in recent years – although no contextual data is provided to allow an understanding of why presentations have dropped so significantly (ie have there been times when through staff shortages or other reasons the service hasn't been available for people to be referred to) – however based on the numbers of people being referred to the Out of Hours service at Fakenham it is proposed that in future this service is withdrawn altogether.
- 3.1.3 At North Walsham, patient numbers accessing the Out of Hours service have also reduced in recent times, but not to a significant degree, and the options outlined at North Walsham in the consultation documents propose retaining the service but operating over different (reduced) hours.

#### **3.2 Norwich Walk-In Centre:-**

- 3.2.1 The consultation documents consider the possible closure or reducing the opening hours of the Norwich NHS Walk-In Centre, with the costs saved being reinvested in primary care services across Norfolk and Waveney.
- 3.2.2 The data pack providing information on patient numbers and origin for the Norwich Walk-In Centre suggest that a small number of North Norfolk residents access the current service and may therefore be inconvenienced if the service was to close or operate on reduced hours, possibly placing demands on other elements of the NHS – ie community pharmacies through the Pharmacy First programme where North Norfolk residents already appear to be disadvantaged through a number of pharmacies operating on reduced hours because of recruitment challenges; Out of Hours GP service (which itself is being considered for service changes as detailed at para 3.1 above) or Minor Injuries or A&E presentations or calls to the ambulance service. It also isn't stated within the consultation documents how any monies saved through the closure or reduced hours operation of the Norwich Walk-In Centre might be distributed to GP practices and whether any of these funds might be redirected to GP practices in North Norfolk.

### **3.3 Vulnerable Adults Service:-**

- 3.3.1 The Vulnerable Adults service is based in Norwich and provides enhanced primary medical support to people with a complex range of needs. It operates between 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday and aims to address health inequalities by bringing together specialist healthcare professionals to provide inclusion health services to individuals and groups who might otherwise find it difficult to access primary care services through being socially excluded and likely to experience stigma and discrimination, live chaotic lives and typically experience multiple overlapping risk factors for poor health. Many people using the service are homeless and their experiences frequently lead to barriers in access to healthcare and extremely poor health outcomes. The service provides targeted inclusion health services on a short-term basis, usually up to six months after which service users are then integrated back to one of the 20 nominated Inclusion Health Practices in Norwich to ensure a supported transition and to plan for their ongoing needs. Inclusion health communities elsewhere in Norfolk and Waveney (as well as in Norwich) are supported by GP practices and other health and care services.
- 3.3.2 Given the focus of the Vulnerable Adults Service, it is not thought that any changes to the service would have significant impact on residents or communities in North Norfolk.

## **4. Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 North Norfolk District Council delivers services to and supports local residents and communities across an extensive rural geography of more than 360 sq miles. Whilst the challenges of financing and delivering public services to dispersed rural communities are recognized by the Council, the authority believes that the district's residents should not be unreasonably disadvantaged in being able to access public services – particularly health services, because of the issue of rurality.
- 4.2 The North Norfolk District has one of the oldest age profiles in the country and previously Professor Sir Chris Whitty commented in his 2023 annual report "Health in an Ageing Society" that health services needed to adapt in places like North Norfolk to meet the specific needs of this community – who, with increasing age, are likely to find it difficult in being able to access services independently through being unable to drive and are therefore dependent on public transport, family, friends and neighbours or patient or community transport to access health services. In this respect changes to the Out of Hours GP service and the Norwich Walk-In Centre could see greater demand placed on the Ambulance Service and A&E presentations and admissions could disadvantage North Norfolk residents and have unintended consequences on other parts of the health system.
- 4.3 The Council therefore has a legitimate role in speaking for its local communities in respect of possible service changes in the district by health partners.

## **5. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 5.1 There are no direct costs to the District Council in responding to this consultation.

**6. Legal Implications**

- 6.1 It is not considered that there are any legal issues for the District Council by this report.

**7. Risks**

- 7.1 It is not considered that there are any significant risks to the council from this report.

**8. Net Zero Target**

- 8.1 There are no Net Zero issues arising for the District Council from this report.

**9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

- 9.1 This report invites comments from the District Council as a stakeholder on future service delivery changes by another local public service provider. There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion issues arising from this report for the District Council – it will be for the Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment in respect of each of the options detailed within the consultation document.

**10. Community Safety issues**

- 10.1 There are no community safety issues arising from this report.

**11. Conclusion and Recommendations**

**The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to discuss and comment on the proposals outlined in the Norfolk and Waveney ICB public consultation documents, with the Committee's views forming the Council's corporate response to the consultation.**