Health Overview Scrutiny Committee
18th October 2021

This was a question-and-answer meeting for both the Ambulance service and access to primary care with access to GPs being the primary concern.

The primary questions to the Ambulance service were about the closure of several Community Ambulance Stations. The resulting answers attempted to convince the members that the staff were happy with the closures and would save both time and money to be spent on the service.

It was not possible to supply the details of consultation with the staff as this was anecdotal and if the call was from a rural location, it would take time, as the only available vehicle may be at the far end of the area.

Many vehicles spent many hours waiting outside hospitals to transfer the patient. To emphasise the point, real time information was given that at 2:50pm there were 9 vehicles available and over 330 emergency calls. It would be difficult to say that all the members concerns were alleviated.

It was a commonly held belief that access to a GP was difficult if not impossible. In response it was emphasised that Covid had made a big difference and that primary care was changing with more stress being put on digital access. To facilitate this, surgeries were being helped to upgrade their phone systems, but this may take time to implement.

The government's announcement of £250M would, in the opinion of the CCG, only produce an extra 110 sessions in Worcestershire.

On the issue of receptionist asking medical questions members were assured that they were adequately trained in both confidentiality and data protection and were trying to direct the caller to the right destination. The situation of GPs was discussed covering areas such as stress levels, an aging population of GPs, recruitment and salaries and a lower number of partnerships that led to lower commitment to the surgery.

Overall, it was anticipated that the number of face-to-face appointments would increase over time as we return to some form of normal.

Councillor Mike Chalk