



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>CONSULTATION – BELFAST HEALTH &amp; SOCIAL CARE TRUST: A CONSULTATION PROPOSAL TO RESHAPE MATERNITY SERVICES IN BELFAST</b>
<b>Date:</b>	Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Suzanne Wylie, Director of Health & Environmental Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Geoff Dickson, Policy & Performance Analyst

### Purpose

To bring to the attention of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, details of a consultation document by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (the Trust) on its proposal to reorganise the Maternity Care in the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and to agree either a Council response or that individual party groups respond to the consultation separately.

### Relevant Background Information

#### Summary of Consultation Document

The Council received a consultation document (Appendix 1) from The Trust outlining proposed changes to the provision of maternity services in Belfast. In the consultation document, five options were initially considered by The Trust for the reshaping of maternity services. These were subsequently reduced to three for more detailed examination. This extract from the consultation document summarises these options:

**Option 1** Maintain Consultant-led Obstetric services at the Royal Jubilee Maternity Service and Mater Hospital, including current models of Midwife-Led Care in both Units (this is the status-quo);

**Option 2** Establish one Consultant-led Obstetric service and an Alongside Midwife-Led Unit at the Royal Jubilee Maternity Service only;

**Option 3** Establish one Consultant-led Obstetric Service, including current models of midwife-led care, at the Royal Jubilee Maternity Service and a Free-standing Midwife-Led Unit at the Mater Hospital.

In the document, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust recommend that Option 3 is taken forward. This will establish one Consultant-led Obstetric Service, including current models of midwife-led care, at the Royal Jubilee Maternity Service and a free-standing Midwife-Led Unit at the Mater Hospital. The Trust states that Option 3 is the preferred option for the Belfast Maternity Service because it will:

- Give women greater choice in their options for maternity care, with the change to a Free-standing Midwife-Led Unit at the Mater Hospital;
- Improve safety for all women by bringing together the Labour Ward consultant obstetric presence in one unit;
- Maintain the existing clinical linkages to other regional services on the Royal Hospital site, including the Regional Neonatal Unit and The Children's Hospital;
- Offers the necessary physical capacity to accommodate one consultant-led obstetric service

in the Royal Jubilee Maternity Service;

- Locate a free-standing Midwife-Led Unit at the Mater, where the necessary physical capacity exists;
- Significantly improve training and supervision of junior doctors as a consequence of single site consultant-led care;
- Align with the strategic direction set by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and the Health and Social Care Board/Public Health Agency.

### **Belfast Trust Open Presentation to Committee**

On 21 May 2012 all Councillors were invited to a presentation from the Belfast Trust to outline the consultation document and ask questions they may have on the proposals to the officers from The Trust who were present. Following the presentation, Members asked a number of questions which were answered by the Trust, as follows:

#### ***Are these proposals about saving money? Has there been feedback from the trade unions? What is the latest position on a specialist children & women unit?***

Councillors were assured that the proposals were not about saving money, but rather improving quality and safety. There may be some value for money savings, particularly in a reduction in locum doctors being used, but it is not the driver.

With reference to trade union feedback, it was outlined that the proposals do not cut staff numbers. Trade unions have been consulted and some are opposed as they feel it lessens the service provision in north Belfast. Others (for example the Royal College of Nurses) are in favour of the proposals.

Councillors were informed that regarding a specialist women & children unit, it is hoped that 3 floors of a new building in the Royal Hospital will be dedicated to women and children.

#### ***Can we be assured that serious considerations will be given to any feedback received from the Council?***

Councillors were assured that the opinions of locally elected politicians were very important in the consultation process and they will be given serious consideration. It was stated that previous consultation responses to the Trust have resulted in changes to proposals.

#### ***Option 3 seems to reduce choice for people in Belfast. Will you ensure people are well informed about the choices available to them?***

The Maternity Charter was referred to which outlines the rights and choices available to patients; it was explained how this Charter was given to all patients and enabled them to make fully informed decisions.

#### ***Are there any indicative costs for Option 3?***

It was stated that while there were no additional revenue costs, there would be small capital costs for minor refurbishments.

Following this discussion, Members present expressed no concerns with The Trust's recommended option.

### **Summary of UNISON response**

Following the presentation to Committee, the Council received correspondence from UNISON that they were opposing Option 3 and instead supporting Option 1. They asked that all Councillors be given the opportunity to read their consultation response (Appendix 2) and subsequently it was emailed to all Councillors. In their submission, UNISON give their support for Option 1 with the

following reasons:

- It best meets the needs of women and their partners
- It protects local accessible maternity provision for women
- It keeps all options and choices available
- The other Trust proposals put the long term viability of the Mater under threat
- Consultant care, for those who need it, available on both sites is the best option
- It is the option supported by midwives at the Mater Hospital
- The new maternity hospital at the Royal is years from completion
- The Royal is currently under special measures
- There is no need to take this decision until the new maternity hospital is open

### **Consultation Response**

The closing date for feedback to the consultation paper is 31<sup>st</sup> May. However, given the presentation to Councillors on 21<sup>st</sup> May, the Trust agreed to accept a response from the Council up to the 11<sup>th</sup> June.

### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to either endorse one of the 3 proposed options or refer to individual Party Groups for individual consideration. Officers will subsequently write to The Trust informing them of the Council position.

### **Documents Attached**

Appendix 1 – Belfast Health & Social Care Trust consultation document

Appendix 2 – UNISON response to the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust consultation document.