

Report of Secretary for Scotland to Guild Council Meeting 9/2/10

Group Meetings

There have been no meetings since my last report to Council.

In the Press

22.10.09 - The first direct elections to Scottish health boards will be held on 10 June 2010. They are being piloted in Fife, and Dumfries and Galloway.

10.12.09 - Audit Scotland said the health service in Scotland will face "significant" financial pressures over the next five years, as the impact of the recession on public sector spending means NHS budgets were likely to fall. It also warned the country faced some deep-seated health problems that the health service alone could not tackle. But it said the financial performance of the NHS in Scotland had been "good" over the past year. The Audit Scotland report said the NHS had met most of its national targets for patient care and service improvement in 2008-09. All of Scotland's NHS boards met their financial targets, and the health service had an overall £4m underspend.

17.12.09 - The Scottish directorate of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society will be moving to new premises from 5 January 2010. The new address is confirmed as being Holyrood Park House, 106 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8AS. Other contact details remain the same.

13.12.09 - Labour politicians called for immediate action to tackle the threat from superbug infections after it emerged that healthcare-associated infections cost Scottish hospitals £183 million a year to treat. On average it costs an extra £2,105 to treat a patient with such an infection, according to an answer to a parliamentary question

15.12.09 - Questions are being asked over why a series of pay increases worth between £5,000 and £10,000 were awarded in 2008-9 to senior Scottish NHS executives as the UK's resources were being used up trying to save the banks.

06.01.10 - Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon has called for a freeze on distinction awards for top doctors and urged all four UK governments to support an overhaul of the system. She has called for a UK-wide review of the awards system that would see the existing schemes replaced with a fairer system that recognises the outstanding contributions of the range of practitioners who deliver healthcare in the 21st century. She has also written to the chairman of the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body to advise them that she wishes the budget to be frozen in cash terms at this year's level and to see no overall increase in the total number of distinction awards next year.

28.01.10 - The Scottish Parliament has banned commercial companies from delivering general practice in Scotland. The BMA said the move will ensure 'continuity of care of patients' and ensure that general practice 'remains the cornerstone of the NHS'.

4.02.2010 - The Scottish Parliament approved the reduction of the prescription charge from £4 to £3 from April 1st.

Scottish Health Sector Senior Representatives Committee 5.2.10

Internal: It was likely that there would be an election for General Secretary before the end of the Year. Derek Simpson was retiring this year and Tony Woodley is due to retire next year.

NHS Financial Situation: At a meeting with Kevin Woods, Director of the NHS, Michael Fuller was told that it was expected that all the health boards would manage to keep within their budgets this year and next year, but that he expected 2011-12 to be very difficult. There were not going to be any major structural changes at the moment as there is no appetite for reorganisation before the 2011 Scottish elections. There is doubt, however, whether the current 22 health boards and 33 local authorities can be sustained in the longer term. There was a question as to whether the NHS could live within even protected budgets without having to reduce revenue costs e.g. staff. Health Boards have been instructed to do everything possible to reduce non-pay costs. Links with local authorities would be examined. Restructuring is not an option, but almost everything else would be considered.

Nuffield Trust Report: The published findings which were critical of NHS Scotland had been taken apart by the Health Department and the figures slammed as totally distorted.

Grampian Health Board: It was reported that Grampian had given enhanced early, voluntary, retirement packages to 62 staff. Apparently, there were around 400 expressions of interest and about 100 applications, but finance for only 62 packages.

Quality Strategy: the launch of this strategy is imminent. It will have to link in with the workforce strategy.

Pensions: The choice paperwork is being issued on a south to north basis, starting in NHS Borders. The first batch was posted on 27th January and over the next 4 weeks a further 5-6,000 letters will be posted each day. Michael Fuller said he would forward the posting schedule to reps when he received it. 137,100 staff were eligible for the choice exercise out of the 156,000 NHS staff. The closing date for all staff to return their choice will be 30th June 2010. If staff do not return their choice, they will be deemed to have decided to stay in the current scheme. A call centre is being set up at the Scottish Public Pensions Agency to deal with telephone queries. Issue of superannuation benefits statements will resume next year and which scheme has been selected will be noted on the statement.

Meeting on PRB Recommendation on RRP

A meeting is to be arranged between Michael, Fuller, Dave Thornton and myself and the civil servants involved in the decisions on implementation of the PRB recommendations to discuss whether there is a way forward on the issue.

Review of NHS Production in Scotland

Since the decision that the preparation of the business case should be taken forward by Tayside Health Board, nothing further has been heard.

AfC

The majority of Review results in *Greater Glasgow & Clyde* have now been issued. Many staff, however, have received letters informing them that the process is not yet complete for their review and they will have to wait an unspecified time for the result.

Michael Fuller M.B.E.

Congratulations go to Michael Fuller who was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire in the New Years Honours list for services to the NHS and to the Unite Trade Union in Scotland.

Other

I have dealt with a number of member queries and a few new membership applications.

Colin Rodden
5.2.10