Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Agenda Item 15

Subject: **Surrey & Sussex Winter Planning 2026-27**

Date of meeting: **18 November 2026**

Report of: **Chair of the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

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Ward(s) affected: (All Wards);

Key Decision: No

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 Integrated Care Systems (e.g. the Surrey & Sussex Integrated Care Board) are required to produce annual winter plans. Winter plans aim to ensure that the local health and care system effectively manages additional demand across the winter months.

1.2 The Surrey & Sussex winter plan has been ratified and circulated. The strategic approach underpinning the plan is being presented to the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) for information and comment (see Appendix 1). A follow-up report will come to the HOSC in spring/summer 2027 to update the committee on actual system performance over the winter period and on lessons learnt.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes the contents of this report, and – if it wishes – makes comment on it.

3. Context and background information

3.1 The overall purpose of the Surrey & Sussex-wide winter plan is to ensure that the system is able to effectively manage the capacity and demand pressures anticipated during the winter period to meet the needs of the local population. The winter planning period covers the period November 2026 to April 2027. The plan supports local systems to remain resilient and able to manage demand surge effectively, maintain patient safety, and support delivery of the relevant business plan objectives and locally agreed system improvements during this period.

3.2 Health and care systems typically experience increased demand pressures during the winter months due to a number of factors including:

- Seasonal illnesses (e.g. flu, norovirus)
- Covid 19
- Extreme weather (e.g. falls in icy conditions)
- Exacerbation of respiratory illnesses and a range of long-term conditions due to cooler weather
- Ongoing impact from the cost-of-living crisis affecting the most vulnerable in the local population to keep well.

3.3 Health and care systems have been planning systemically for winter surge pressures for a number of years, and typically a key part of this process is assessing how well the previous year's plans met demand and using learning from this to inform the subsequent year's planning.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 Not applicable to this report for information.

5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 None undertaken for this information report.

6. Financial implications

6.1 Any additional costs resulting from the Winter Plan will need to be met from within identified resources across NHS Sussex and the Council.

6.2 Winter pressures cause significant financial strain across Health & Social . Current budget forecasting accounts for anticipated increased demand over this period. However, budget forecasts may be subject to variation later in the year due to the unpredictable nature of the impact on services during the winter.

Date 10/11/2026 Ishemupenyu Chagonda

7. Legal implications

7.1 The Council's Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee has delegated to it the statutory responsibility of reviewing and scrutinising matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in Brighton & Hove.

7.2 While the Winter Plan appended to this report is a high-level strategic plan as opposed to a proposal to make specific changes to existing healthcare provision, it nonetheless has potential to impact on the lives of the people of Brighton & Hove. As a result, this Committee is invited to consider the appendix and - if it wishes - to make comment on the matters reported on.

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8. Equalities implications

8.1 The aims of effective collaborative winter plan arrangements are to ensure that local health and care systems are able to continue to deliver the services that have been developed to meet the needs of the local population. Cold weather disproportionately affects our most vulnerable residents, and the Winter Plan seeks to ensure that resources are targeted to support those at greatest risk. Specific services will be further developed to support delivery of the Plan during the winter period and equality impact assessments will be undertaken to support the development of those specific services.

9. Sustainability implications

9.1 The winter plan considers how best to use NHS and local authority resources across Sussex in order to cope with seasonal demand surges for health and care services. Any negative carbon impacts of these plans (e.g. through people potentially having to travel further from home to access services where local capacity is stretched) need to be considered. However, this needs to be balanced against the risks to individuals of not being able to access appropriate health or care.

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications:

10.1 Health and wellbeing implications are addressed in Appendix 1.

11. Conclusion

11.1 Members are asked to note information provided by the NHS Surrey & Sussex Integrated Care Board on health and care system planning for winter 2025/26.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

Information provided by NHS Surrey & Sussex Integrated Care Board on system winter planning 2026-27