



Leader of the Council

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To : Council Leaders of Local Authorities

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Dear colleagues

RE: EMERGING BOB ICS

I hope you are all well. I wanted to get in touch to highlight some of my growing concerns about the emerging Integrated Care System for the BOB area, both in relation to financial pressures on our councils and in relation to governance and leadership as we move forward.

Financial Pressures

The significant increases in volume we have seen post pandemic is, I suspect, causing financial pressures for us all. Within the BOB area there has been a very hard stop to the additional 'discharge to assess' funding which has helped the system, as a whole, manage throughput for hospitals by buying more residential or domiciliary care to enable swifter discharge (and at a much lower unit cost than is provided via acute hospital care). Concerns have been raised with our local NHS, via our CEOs, about the decision for this funding to end and, although it was extended for a further 2 months, it is due to cease at the end of May. This is in stark contrast to some other areas where funding is being moved from other budgets within the NHS to support the system as a whole. This leaves councils in our area in the insidious position of either ceasing the commissioning of this service with the risk of the acute hospital sector immediately clogging up or funding this service, in whole or in part, despite the NHS receiving much more significant financial uplifts than local government.

Governance

I am increasingly concerned about an apparent lack of understanding and / or disregard for the importance of democratic structures and political 'line of sight' / accountability linked to the future governance state of the ICB. I understood that the ICS was supposed to be a 'partnership' between the NHS and local Government. However, despite a large number of execs and non-exec (NEDS) being appointed to the proposed new Board, our local ICB continues to assert that there will only be a single local government representative around the table. This contrast to other ICSs in the country where multiple local council representatives have been proposed in the spirit both of teamwork but also to give a clear understanding of the issues associated with social care. This does not feel like the approach in BOB.

In addition, we have been clearly advised that the group to develop the ICP can only have a single representative from each council as part of its working group. This working group is entirely populated by officers. Although the involvement of senior managerial colleagues is clearly critical, this should not be at the expense of democratically elected representative oversight, and I see no reason why such a working group would not include both a managerial and political representative.

I would be interested in understanding your views on these issues? I would be happy to arrange a short meeting of Leaders via Teams if that would be helpful. I understand that a parallel meeting of our Chief Executives is also being arranged. I am not trying to be negative, but I think it is important that the ICS gets the right governance, relationships and cultures in place from the beginning.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Tett". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Martin Tett
Leader
Buckinghamshire Council