

DECISION-MAKER:		COUNCIL	
SUBJECT:		SOUTH CENTRAL STRATEGIC HEALTH AUTHORITY CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR WATER FLUORIDATION IN SOUTHAMPTON AND PARTS OF SOUTH WEST HAMPSHIRE	
DATE OF DECISION:		19 TH NOVEMBER 2008	
REPORT OF:		CHAIR OF THE HEALTHY CITY SCRUTINY PANEL	
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

None.

SUMMARY

In September 2008 the South Central Strategic Health Authority (SHA) launched a 14 week consultation process on proposals to add fluoride to local water supplies in order to reduce tooth decay and help address dental health inequalities. This proposal will affect approximately 160,000 residents in Southampton as well as individuals living in other parts of South West Hampshire. Water fluoridation is a complex and often emotive issue with a substantial amount of scientific research and other evidence being presented both in support of and against this proposal. The authority's response to the SHA's consultation exercise will need to be determined by members at the Council meeting. In order to assist this process the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee commissioned the Healthy City Scrutiny Panel to undertake a scrutiny inquiry into the SHA's proposals. The findings from the scrutiny inquiry are appended to this report to help inform the debate at Full Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

- (i) That Council notes the findings of the Healthy City Scrutiny Panel inquiry set out in the attached appendix and having considered the three recommendations set out in paragraph 8 of this report agrees its response to the Strategic Health Authority on proposals to introduce water fluoridation in Southampton as well as other parts of south west Hampshire.

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To enable the Council to formulate its response to the South Central Strategic Health Authority's proposal to add fluoride to the local water supply.

CONSULTATION

2. Extensive consultation was undertaken during the course of the scrutiny inquiry with a range of officers, health practitioners and various organisations

providing written and verbal information to panel members, which both supported and opposed the addition of fluoride to water supplies. The details of all of the contributors who participated in the inquiry process are listed at the end of the attached scrutiny report.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

3. The Healthy City Scrutiny Panel considered the evidence provided by witnesses and questioned the contributors over the course of 3 inquiry meetings. Members of the Healthy City Scrutiny Panel considered a number of alternative options to water fluoridation but on the balance of evidence provided supported the SHA's proposal to add fluoride to the local water supply. The recommendations set out in the attached inquiry report reflect the majority view of the panel's members.

DETAIL

4. At its meeting on 11th September the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) commissioned the Healthy City Scrutiny Panel to undertake an inquiry into the SHA consultation document "Public consultation on the proposal for water fluoridation in Southampton and parts of South West Hampshire".
5. The following terms of reference were allocated to the Healthy City Scrutiny Panel by the OSMC:
 - To analyse the SHA's proposals to fluoridate the water supply for 160,000 residents, plus workers in the city, paying particular attention to:
 - The potential effectiveness of fluoridating the water supply as a means of improving dental health and addressing dental health inequalities;
 - Ethical issues of fluoridating the water supply to the population at large;
 - The wider health concerns raised in respect of fluoridation of water supplies.
 - To formulate recommendations for the full Council meeting on 19th November to enable the Council to produce a formal response from the authority to the SHA's proposals.
6. The inquiry was undertaken by members over the course of 3 meetings. In excess of 9 hours of evidence was taken from witnesses on 22nd September and 13th October and supplementary written information was provided by contributors to follow up on particular issues raised at these meetings. The final meeting of the Healthy City Scrutiny panel on 29th October 2008 enabled members to finalise the attached report and to formulate recommendations which reflect the majority view of the panel's members.
7. The attached inquiry report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) on the 6th November. The OSMC agreed that the Healthy City Scrutiny panel had met its terms of reference and the attached report was approved for submission to Full Council. It was also acknowledged by the Committee that this had been a challenging and

complex scrutiny inquiry and thanks were expressed to all of the contributors who participated in the review as well as the work undertaken by the Chair of the panel (Councillor Cooke) and the scrutiny co-ordinator (Martin Day) in progressing the inquiry within the relatively short SHA consultation timeframe.

8. At the conclusion of the inquiry the Healthy City Scrutiny Panel have agreed 3 recommendations to be submitted to Full Council as follows:-

Recommendation 1:

That having considered a wide range of evidence the Council endorses the Strategic Health Authority's proposed scheme to fluoridate the water supply, as set out in its consultation document, as a means of improving dental health and reducing dental health inequalities.

Recommendation 2:

That if the scheme to fluoridate the water supply is implemented, Southampton City Primary Care Trust should report formally to the Council on the effect of trends in dental health over the first 5 years' operation.

Recommendation 3:

That if the scheme to fluoridate the water supply is not implemented, Southampton City Primary Care Trust be requested to report to the Healthy City Scrutiny Panel on proposals to improve dental health in the city.

9. In addition the panel expressed concern about the SHA's consultation process and its propensity to allow double representation of the views expressed by District and County Councils when compared to unitary authorities.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Capital

10. There are no additional capital costs to the council arising from the proposals set out in this report. The SHA has estimated that the capital cost of introducing a local water fluoridation scheme would be £471,000. These costs would be met in full by the Department for Health from its annual budget for water fluoridation projects.

Revenue

11. There are no additional revenue costs to the council arising from the inquiry. The cost of officer and member time involved in undertaking this review has been met from existing Council budgets as an integral part of the overall programme of scrutiny activities for the current year. The revenue costs of implementing a water fluoridation scheme are estimated to be £59,000 per annum. These costs would be met by the Southampton City Primary Care Trust (PCT) as part of its dental health budget and no additional revenue costs would fall on the City Council.

Property

12. There are no property issues for the council from this inquiry.

Other

13. None.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:

14. The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Other Legal Implications:

15. The duty for the SHA to undertake the consultation is set out in the Water Act 2003.

POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS

16. None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices

A.	Report of the Scrutiny Inquiry into South Central Strategic Health Authority’s consultation on proposals for Water Fluoridation in Southampton and parts of south west Hampshire.

Documents In Members’ Rooms

	None.

Background Documents

Title of Background Paper(s)	Relevant Paragraph of the Access to Information Procedure Rules / Schedule 12A allowing document to be Exempt/Confidential (if applicable)
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	None.	

Background documents available for inspection at: Not applicable

FORWARD PLAN No: None **KEY DECISION?** No

WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	All
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