

Report on	Response to public consultation on 'Reshaping Breast Assessment Services'
Date of Meeting	13 th June 2019
Reporting / Contact Officer	Fiona McKeown, Head of Economic Development

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>On 25th March 2019, the Department of Health commenced its consultation on 'Reshaping Breast Assessment Services' across all Health Trust Areas. The consultation will run until 17th June 2019. The purpose of this Paper is to consider a draft Response to the Report.</p> <p>Council meeting on 15th April 2019, it was agreed that Council would prepare a response to this consultation. Delegated power granted to the Development Committee scheduled on 13 June 2019 to approve response.</p>
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>The Consultation explains that the Introduction of a new reconfiguration of Breast Assessment Services has been necessitated by the following factors:</p> <p>Current configuration of Breast Assessment Services does not meet the Ministerial standards for waiting times at Breast Assessment Clinics. Breast Assessment Services provide an outpatients clinic for patients with either breast symptoms that may be suggestive of cancer, or require follow up of a breast screening mammography test. People referred with suspected breast cancer should be seen and assessed with 14 days.</p> <p>The cause for poor performance levels in achieving timely breast assessment services is mainly due to shortage of specialist staff, particularly consultant radiologists. Staff shortages are not being considered as part of this process.</p> <p>Significant pressure on Assessment Services due to an increasing number of referrals. Department Of Health figures for Symptomatic Breast Assessment Clinics in 2016-17 shows that the Southern Health and Social Care Trust as having the second largest attendances at 4,378, for new patients.</p> <p>Currently there are Breast Assessment Services in all five Health and Social Care Trusts for patients with symptoms that are categorised as red flag and routine.</p>

	<p>The proposal involves Breast Assessment Services being consolidated on three hospital sites including Ulster Hospital, Altnagelvin Area Hospital and Antrim Area Hospital. The reconfiguration of Breast Assessment Services will see the removal of Assessment Services from Southern Health and Social Care Trust and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust areas. Belfast Trust area is to be served by South Eastern Trust at Ulster Hospital.</p> <p>DOH documents state that this consultation refers only to breast assessment clinics. However, in a recent statement from the DOH they confirmed that ‘the Department will shortly commence a further review that will consider wider Breast Services’.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Overarching comments in consultation response include:</p> <p>Mid Ulster District Council strongly opposes the proposed reduction from five to three-site model for Breast Assessment Services. The three-site model will see the complete removal of outpatient breast diagnostic services from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area.</p> <p>Mid Ulster District Council is located in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area. Southern Trust area has the second largest population across all Health Trust areas with 380,312 people. Removal of Breast Assessment Services seriously affects the lives of 60,775 Mid Ulster Citizens who live in this Trust area.</p> <p>The consolidation of breast assessment services from five to three locations will result in unacceptable increased travel times for people living in Mid Ulster and the wider Southern Health Trust area. The HSCB Projects Board’s own assessment of options found a four-location model to be the most favourable across all appraised options. The Department of Health need to explain their methodology and real reasons for proposing a three-site model.</p> <p>Recommendations by Department of Health are unclear and confusing. Consultation materials has failed to provide the full picture as to their future intentions for wider Breast Services across the five Health Trust areas, in particular Craigavon Area Hospital. Council are of the view that this proposal is the first step in a phased withdrawal of Breast Services from the Craigavon Area Hospital. Council strongly reject the withdrawal of any Breast Services from the Southern Health Trust area.</p> <p>Council recognise that some changes are required for the future delivery of Breast Assessment Services, so that a high quality and timely service are delivered. Department of Health need to consider other ways that will increase capacity for Breast Services across all areas.</p> <p>People from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area will be required to attend a hospital outside their area for Breast Assessment Services and Treatment in another. Continuity of care must be delivered at one location throughout the patient pathway to prevent further hardship.</p>

	<p>The cause for poor performance levels in achieving timely breast assessment services is mainly due to shortage of specialist staff, especially Consultant Radiologists. The Council are firmly of the view that, in order to address this issue the Department of Health need to consider the reasons for their inability to train and recruit more staff, and respond appropriately. Reconfiguring the entire Breast Assessment Services to three locations will not get more specialist staff than if in five locations.</p> <p>No other options has been provided in the consultation document that looks at additional ways of increasing capacity at Breast Assessment Clinic's. Council demand that the Department of Health consider other options that will adopt a long term approach to increased capacity and sustainability of Breast Assessment Services.</p> <p>Council requests that an Equality Screening, Rural Proofing and Rural Needs Assessments be completed, in accordance with the Statutory Framework.</p> <p>The draft Response from Council is attached as Appendix 1.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: not applicable
	Human: not applicable
	Risk Management: not applicable
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: not applicable
	Rural Needs Implications: not applicable
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Development Committee approve consultation response in time for it to be received by Department of Health deadline of 17 th June 2019.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1 – Draft response from Council to Department of Health