

FAO: Ms. Karen Mason
Acting Director of Communications and Public Involvement
Heron Court
Ida Darwin
Fulbourn
Cambridge
CB1 5EE

27 April 2007

Our Ref: SL/

Dear Karen,

SEEKING SUSTAINABLE HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE PEOPLE OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE.

Thank you for opportunity to, comment as part of the formal consultation process, on the range of proposals for the future of services currently provided by Hinchingsbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust (HHCT). I should say at the outset that Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) is anxious that any service changes in relation to Hinchingsbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust should not, as far as possible, reduce the quality and accessibility of services for residents in Huntingdonshire. The recent petition to preserve services at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital attracted in excess of 50,000 signatures. Therefore it is a key objective of HDC that the future of the hospital be secured. The Council is mindful that the future of the hospital hinges on the Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust's (PCT) commissioning plans and their willingness to commission services from HHCT.

There is considerable demand for reassurance about the process, the nature, and robustness of data informing the PCT's proposals. For example:

- The £14.5M identified savings are dependant on increased efficiencies at the Hinchingsbrooke site but there is no indication, within the consultation document, of the robustness of the estimate nor the difficulties that must be overcome in realising the savings.
- The £2.5M PCT investment in community-based services is said to be based on projected commissioning costs yet no allowance has seems to have been made for any structural alterations to buildings that may be necessary to host these services within the community.
- No allowance seems to have been made for costs incurred during any lag in the implementation of the plan, to allow recruitment of adequate numbers of community-based staff.

There is also a desire for evidence that consideration of the wider social impact of decisions relating to hospital services has been as inclusive as possible. Hinchingsbrooke Hospital is part of a wider network of interdependent services and support. For example: the established public transport links to the hospital are unlikely to be available to all of the community-based clinics.

In relation to process, serious concern has been expressed that in considering Hinchingsbrooke in isolation and in advance of the comprehensive strategic review by the Strategic Health Authority (SHA), a situation is being created whereby HHCT could be subject to two stringent reviews in a very short period. The cumulative effect of implementing adjustments from serial

reviews could have a serious negative impact on hospital services. Reassurance is sought that any modifications to services arising from this review will be accepted by the SHA and **not subject to further reductions in the context of the strategic review**. It is possible that if the strategic impacts of the Hinchingsbrooke review-recommendations could not be demonstrated to have been properly considered then elected-Member(s) may formally object and may ask the Scrutiny Panel to call in any relevant decision(s).

There are some unresolved concerns around any future dissolution of the HHC Trust. A significant amount of saving has been attributed to this dissolution in the proposals; yet no firm proposals for alternative governance arrangements have been offered. Members are concerned that amalgamation with either Peterborough or Addenbrookes Hospital Trusts is not attractive for preserving the local interest. A merger with the PCT Provider Trust may be more attractive but the provider arm of PCT does not have Trust status yet and there are no indications of the investment that would be required to achieve such an arrangement.

It is also a matter of concern that no assumptions about future population growth have been made, yet Huntingdonshire is in a growth area. Both of the new settlements: Cambourne and Northstowe are within Hinchingsbrookes catchment. Northstowe in particular has seen the planned development increase by a further 2000 homes. It is expected that west-of-Cambridge communities will rely on Hinchingsbrooke Hospital services as Addenbrookes Hospital relieves pressure from Hertfordshire's growth. Huntingdonshire is an area included in the Regional Spatial Strategy as a growth-area post-2021. Members would wish to have some reassurance about the robustness of the forward-planning included in the proposals. In order to keep Members informed we would welcome periodic briefings as work progresses.

The templates for responses are attached to this letter as appendices. I hope this information proves useful to the PCT in planning for services for residents in Huntingdonshire.

Yours sincerely

**IAN BATES
LEADER
HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**