

Mr Alan Burns  
Chairman, Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust  
Hinchingsbrooke Hospital  
Hinchingsbrooke Park  
Huntingdon  
Cambridgeshire  
PE29 6NT

*Date*

Dear Mr Burns,

**PROPOSED MERGER OF THE TRUSTS RUNNING HINCHINGBROOKE AND PETERBOROUGH AND STAMFORD HOSPITALS – CURRENT OBSERVATIONS OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Huntingdonshire District Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment) recently held a special meeting to consider the proposed merger of Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust (HHCT) and the Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (PSHFT). The Panel welcomed the opportunity to hear from your Chief Executive, Lance McCarthy, as well as from the Chairman of Healthwatch Cambridgeshire, Val Moore. With questions from local residents answered during a public participation session and an opportunity for our elected Members to ask for further explanation of the likely impacts of the proposal, the Panel reflected on what they heard and, with the full endorsement of the Council's Cabinet, both groups of Members have requested that this letter be sent to inform your consultation during the development of the Full Business Case. The Council's key observations are:

**1 - Welcome the strong action being taken to explore options and the clear commitment to continuity of ongoing provision of healthcare services at Hinchingsbrooke** - The Panel was heartened to hear from your Chief Executive that the focus of your work with PSHFT is ensuring the financial and clinical sustainability of safe, local healthcare services and that there is no intention of existing services provided at the Hinchingsbrooke site being moved to other locations or patients being required to travel elsewhere to receive care. This announcement builds on the statement in the Outline Business Case's Executive Summary that *"there is a joint commitment from both trusts to ensure the ongoing provision of safe, sustainable core acute services from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital"*. The Council welcomes this commitment and also the rigorous way the challenges and solutions for local healthcare are being explored by the Trusts, but care is required that options and solutions are not rushed and that the Trusts' proposals are realistic and do not risk failure by attempting to achieve too much too soon in the scale and impact of change.

The Panel expects the Boards of both Trusts, and any future Board of a new merged Trust, to stand by these public statements and to ensure that the ongoing provision of healthcare services at the Hinchingsbrooke site for the benefit of Huntingdonshire residents is at the forefront of all current and future plans.

## **2 - Assurance required of a proper and meaningful public consultation and democratic mandate -**

Based on feedback at our meeting on 28 June, and also the 6,309 local residents who have previously signed a petition to say *"We are opposed to merging Hinchingbrooke Hospital with Peterborough Hospital and a subsequent reduction in services at Hinchingbrooke"*, the Panel is concerned that the public engagement so far has done little to alleviate anxiety and worry among our local residents. While acknowledging that activity was suspended during the purdah period for the EU referendum, the Panel would like to see clear messages delivered and reassurances given publicly that Hinchingbrooke won't be treated as a 'poor relation' if you decide to proceed with a merger. It is essential that a clear programme is set out early for proactive public engagement both now and after a review of the Full Business Case in September.

The Panel is concerned that the lack of local representation on the HHCT Board appears to indicate a 'democratic deficit'. While your Chief Executive told us that a new NHS Foundation Trust would be required to have representation from local residents and Hinchingbrooke staff, the decision regarding on the Formal Business Case will be made by the current Board which only includes one member living within the hospital's general catchment area. This means there is even greater need to engage openly and meaningfully with local residents and a clear obligation to demonstrate how the views of the Huntingdonshire community have been considered and accounted for in your final proposals.

**3 – Need for clarity, consistency and transparency of language** - In presenting the proposal to the public, the Panel would like to see greater care taken by all HHCT representatives and within documentation over the language and terminology used. There is clearly confusion amongst the public as to what is being considered and proposed. With the merger technically being an actual acquisition of Hinchingbrooke by PSFHT, this should be explained clearly with an emphasis on the reasons why this is being considered or deemed necessary. An acquisition, perceived potentially as a 'take-over' as opposed to a genuine merger of equals, raises inevitable concerns of balance of influence and proportionality. Residents ought to be given reassurance and confidence that services will continue to be delivered locally and that patients won't need to travel to other sites to receive quality healthcare.

**4 – Proportionality, influence and balance on an equitable 'group' basis** - The Panel is keen to see the details of costs and benefits clearly identified through the development of the Full Business Case. In particular, they would like to see information and the formula published on how the expected £9m savings through integrating back office functions would be split between HHCT and PSFHT (albeit this may be a nominal split given a merger would see one organisation controlling all funds). This would provide transparency and reassurance that savings would be apportioned fairly.

Linked to this, the Panel would also like to see details published on where potential redundancies would be made. This would show whether job losses are likely to be balanced across all hospital sites and importantly, a holistic 'group' view taken across not only the Hinchingbrooke and Peterborough campuses but also inclusive of Stamford and the contribution it can make to restructuring and realignment. With efficiency savings planned through a separate workstream, the Panel would also like to see details of potential job losses that may arise from that process so that it can gain an understanding of the total number of employees likely to be made redundant and the impact this will have on staff themselves and consequently upon care services and also, critically, how healthcare capacity is to be retained and indeed enhanced through accompanying process efficiencies.

May I take this opportunity to thank you again for the time Lance McCarthy has spent with the Council on a number of occasions to keep us informed on these undoubtedly challenging and

complex issues, which is both helpful and appreciated. Should you require any further information or clarification on the above, please do not hesitate to contact me via the details below.

In the meantime, I do sincerely hope you will take into serious account the views of the Council as you develop the Full Business Case between now and September. Indeed, I look forward to discussion on and explanation of the Business Case when available.

Yours faithfully,

**Councillor Tim Alban**  
**Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment)**  
Email: [tim.alban@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:tim.alban@huntingdonshire.gov.uk)

CC - Lance McCarthy, Chief Executive Officer, Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust  
Rob Hughes, Chairman, Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Stephen Graves, Chief Executive, Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
Jonathan Djanogly MP, Huntingdon Constituency  
Shailesh Vara MP, North-West Cambridgeshire