

LOCAL MEMBER COMMENTS ON REPORT 11 - HINCHINGBROOKE HOSPITAL CONSULTATION

Comments from Councillor Sir Peter Brown

He hoped Cabinet would fully endorse the policy of retaining a full health service for Huntingdonshire pointing out that 55,000 people signed the petition to save the Hospital.

He believed the current consultation would go some way towards allaying people's fears but perhaps not far enough. Personally while others thought the Hospital was safe, he was not convinced, stating that it was not just a question of money but more of Government policy and that the future was still uncertain as a result of the future abolition of the Trust. He was also hearing concerns from some of those involved in Primary Care who did not think they could cope with the proposed changes.

Comment from Councillor Kadić

Agreed that it was important to retain a full health service for Huntingdonshire.

Comments from Councillor Steve Criswell

He supported that Option 2 was the only viable option, but had two major concerns:-

1/ That the provision of adequate community based services had not been properly costed. While an annual budget of £2.5m had been allocated for this purpose, if this proved insufficient, as might be the case, particularly in year one, there could be a lack of service provision in some areas. Without adequate support, community based services would not be able to cope with the increase in demand and additional range of treatments that may be expected of them.

2/ After the dissolution of Hinchingsbrooke Health Care Trust (HHCT), he believed a merger with Peterborough Hospital was inevitable. He believed the result would be a gradual shrinkage of services offered, and that at best Hinchingsbrooke Hospital would become nothing more than a local clinic and at worst it would close altogether.

He stated that a long-term commitment was needed to continue a wide range of services at Hinchingsbrooke and the three-year plan did not do this. He believed unless the PCT effectively addressed the need for a locally accountable, forward thinking replacement for HHCT, then the result would be nothing more than a 'short term fix' aimed at placating the groundswell of public opinion against closure.

Comments from Councillor Heathcock

His main concern remained the availability of sufficient staff in the Community across the patch to take up the "transferred work" which would otherwise be going to Hinchingsbrooke as there had been historical shortages in many specialities. Secondly, the County Council required very much more detail on how the £2.5m was going to be spent and what it would buy. He also expressed concerns on the knock on effect year on year of the costs, and under the Section 31 agreements - what the expectations would be for the County Council - when cuts were made. There were also concerns regarding recent and previous year over spends on Social Care budgets.

He remained deeply concerned that so much detailed work appeared not to have been thoroughly worked through or was available to scrutinise. He queried where commissioning decisions for the Ambulance Trust stood if there were resource changes to be funded, and whether the PCT would have the necessary monies. He also expressed doubt regarding whether the option proposed would enable Hinchingsbrooke Hospital to achieve a balanced budget and also what the steps would be in terms of addressing the historical debt.