Dear David

CONSULTATION IN RELATION TO THE PROVISION OF TOWNLANDS HOSPITAL, HENLEY

Prior to our meeting on Friday, I am writing to set out a few observations on the papers you presented to HOSC in relation to the consultation you have undertaken into the provisioning of services for Townlands Hospital, Henley.

The paper you presented sets out a factual account of what you have done. Given that this is a consultation between the people of the Henley area and OCCG I have to date deliberately kept out of the detailed conversation although we have, of course, had discussions. Now that I have seen the paper presented there are some issues that I would like to raise with you. These issues fall into two groups – issues related to the consultation and issues related to the model.

ISSUES RELATED TO THE CONSULTATION
The principal issue relating to the consultation is that the views expressed against the proposals being advanced by you do not yet appear to have been taken into account or addressed. It may be that this is to come in advance of the OCCG Board meeting later in the month but they should be addressed openly in advance.

The questions to be asked therefore include:

(1) To what extent does OCCG accept the comments made by the people of the area and clinicians as part of the consultation and how will it change the model to address them?
(2) What is being proposed for the OCCG Board meeting at the end of the month?
(3) In addition, there has been local speculation that the introduction of this model is about saving the NHS money. Given that what is being proposed is likely to cost more money, a clear statement on this would be helpful.

ISSUES RELATED TO THE MODEL
The new model being proposed envisages the use of the site as a medical campus. It envisages the provision of additional medical services on site to be provided by the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the development on site of a RACU. It also envisages a total of some 5 beds provided by the care home which will be built alongside the hospital and the call down of additional beds as required. The issue of the quality of nursing staff used in the care home was addressed at the time of the development of Chipping Norton Hospital and remains valid.
The model fits within an overall picture for the county of about three 40-60 bed hospitals and therefore, as we have seen, envisages that Townlands will not provide for the 18 hospital beds originally envisaged other than those booked in the care home. This is to be accompanied by a package of home care services to be provided by the County Council on the basis that care in the home is preferable to care in a hospital.

The community of people in Henley have sought to find out whether their long term health needs are going to be met better by this arrangement than by an arrangement which preserves the original configuration of the hospital and the option of 18 beds. From the feedback from those consulted the model of care being advocated by you has not been generally accepted either by the people of the area or by the local clinical leaders.

The questions that need to be raised include:

(1) To what extent is the new hospital model for Oxfordshire yet developed? So far, there has been no presentation to the county’s MPs on its implications and it would appear that Townlands is being singled out for advance treatment ahead of the model being fully discussed and made operational.

(2) Those in the area who will use the services of the hospital either as clinicians or as patients have not bought into the new model being proposed. There is much in the model which is generally welcomed. However, the replacement of the proposed 18 beds in the hospital by a system of social care remains a theoretical option for many. The County Council have not provided the proof that the service will work or answered local questions as to how it will deal with specific circumstances. To what extent can this element of the service be guaranteed? Personally, I favour the full integration of social care and the NHS within the county.

(3) To what extent does the opinion of those outside Henley but in the area differ from the opinion of those in Henley?

(4) Finally, the issue of a transition phase for the development of these issues has not been fully addressed. I appreciate you may feel such a process may mean that we will never move on to the new model. But, until that model has been fully explored such a process is probably inevitable and should be explored fully.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely,

JOHN HOWELL OBE MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR HENLEY