

The Hunts Post

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I would like to thank you for raising awareness among *Hunts Post* readers about the search to find a new operating partner for Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

There is understandably great interest in the proposals being put forward by the organisations interested in the franchise, so I am writing to explain why it is not currently possible to make the content of the bids public, however much we would like to.

The rigorous procurement process being followed is set down by procurement legislation, meaning that it is not simply possible to share more. Keeping bids confidential until a preferred bidder is appointed is normal procurement practice. The Hinchingsbrooke Next Steps project board is being as transparent as legally possible as the public, of course, expects integrity and the highest possible standards of management on their behalf.

By maintaining the confidentiality of the bids it helps to keep them competitive, helping to secure the very best deal for Hinchingsbrooke. It protects the hospital, patients and staff, and the bidders. If bidders were not given demonstrable reassurance that their information would remain confidential, the project and its commitment would be undermined.

Speculation can only generate confusion, particularly as the bids are still being shaped and may well change before the final invitation to tender is issued, later in the summer. Over the last few months, people have told us that they'd like more clarity around the facts of the franchise process and to know more about the organisations bidding to become partners. So we are doing just that, recently launching our 'top 10 facts' about Hinchingsbrooke Next Steps, and providing opportunities through which the bidders can engage with the public, patients and staff. Details of these can be found either via www.eoe.nhs.uk/strategicprojects or via freephone 0800 923 3001.

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