

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

SUSTAINABLE FUTURE FOR HINCHINGBROOKE MOVES ONE STEP CLOSER

NHS East of England with Hinchingbrooke Health Care NHS Trust is inviting expressions of interest in bidding for a 'franchise' to run Hinchingbrooke Hospital. The aims of the 'franchise' are to secure a sustainable future for the hospital – providing high quality care to patients – and to deliver best value for local people.

This will be an open competitive process. Expressions of interest are being invited from NHS and Independent Sector Providers.

This is the first stage of an open competitive process to find a new partner for Hinchingbrooke Health Care NHS Trust. This means that anyone can express an interest, including other healthcare organisations from within the NHS and the Independent Sector.

This process will deliver on the promises made by the local NHS as a result of the 2007 public consultation on sustaining Hinchingbrooke as a District General Hospital including Maternity and A&E services into the future, whilst ensuring that the staff remain employed by the NHS and the hospital and its assets remain owned by the NHS.

The local NHS is clear that in order to even be considered as a viable partner bidders must show that their bids improve services and quality for patients and the public and offers value for money for the taxpayer.

NHS East of England and Hinchingsbrooke will be working closely with NHS Cambridgeshire, staff and service users in running the process. The process will be overseen by an independently chaired Stakeholder Panel which will represent local interests at every stage of the process. The use of such a panel, to be chaired by David Monks (Chief Executive, Huntingdonshire District Council) is a first for the NHS and shows our commitment to engagement and transparency in the process.

Dr Stephen Dunn, Director of Strategy at NHS East of England said: "We are moving one step closer to securing a sustainable future for Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and delivering on the promises made by the local NHS following consultation in 2007."

Mark Millar, Chief Executive at Hinchingsbrooke added "I am delighted that we can now begin a process which will end the continuing uncertainty. Throughout the process we will be looking for opportunities for staff and services which enhance high quality local services for local people".

Maureen Donnelly, Chair of NHS Cambridgeshire, said:" It is good news that this process has now moved to the next stage. NHS Cambridgeshire will continue to work closely with all interested groups to ensure that there is a long-term sustainable future for Hinchingsbrooke."

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NHS East of England Press Office on 01223 597545 or email pressoffice@eoe.nhs.uk

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- **What was the process for agreeing an Operating Franchise?**

Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust has an accumulated cash debt of nearly £40 million to the rest of the NHS. The Trust returned to year on year financial balance in 2008-09, but with no repayment of the debt planned. In spring 2007, NHS Cambridgeshire, in partnership with NHS East of England and Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust undertook a formal consultation regarding the shape of health services in Huntingdonshire. This consultation set out proposals for the future of hospital services currently provided on the Hinchingsbrooke hospital site.

The 2007 consultation identified that while the same range of services would continue to be delivered at Hinchingsbrooke, a change in governance structure would be required in order to deliver the preferred option and address the major issue of the debt. NHS East of England has been coordinating a process to look at the best way forward which has identified an Operating Franchise as the preferred model. The Department of Health has invited NHS East of England to submit a full business case for approval on this basis.

- **Why is a franchise agreement being pursued?**

A franchise agreement, rather than a takeover, will ensure that the outcomes local people wanted in response to the 2007 consultation are delivered now and in the future, and that the money owed to the rest of the NHS by the hospital can be returned and invested for the benefit of local people.

The contract for the new partner will also ensure NHS Cambridgeshire can intervene and take action to stand up for local people, as they currently do, if there are any concerns over performance at the hospital.

The franchise will also ensure that all staff and assets remain firmly within the NHS family, providing much needed reassurance for staff and local people that this is not privatisation – no assets will be lost to the NHS, and no staff will be transferred out of the NHS, but the promises made about services will be honoured.

A franchise is also time limited, unlike a takeover, which means if the situation changes in the future, the hospital can adapt to any changes.

- **Why will the process include the Independent Sector?**

In order to deliver safe, sustainable services to patients, the public and taxpayers, we need to ensure the widest possible process to identify the most appropriate partner. The Independent Sector already provide many services to NHS patients at NHS prices, so it would be strange if they were not able to show an interest in running the NHS services at Hinchingsbrooke.

Wherever proposals come from, the services for patients including safety, clinical outcomes and patient experience will be the first priority. That is the first hurdle the Independent Sector and NHS organisations who express an interest will have to jump before the issue of money and how they propose to pay back debt to the NHS is factored in.

- **What steps are being taken to engage the public?**

NHS Cambridgeshire are leading public engagement around this project, to ensure that there is widespread public awareness and transparency on any decisions made. We continue to keep stakeholders and the public informed via appearances at the Local Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and through the local media, as well as meeting with staff and patient groups to discuss the issues.

However, we are also proposing to involve people through a variety of innovative approaches which include the Stakeholder Panel, which will meet in public, its agendas and minutes would all be publicly available, and members of the public would be able to send their comments direct to the Panel's Independent Chair.

- **What is the role of the stakeholder panel?**

The Stakeholder Panel's membership will include representatives of staff, the public and the community and the Local Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have the right to summon its Independent Chair to answer questions. David Monks, Chief Executive of Huntingdonshire District Council, will chair the Stakeholder Panel.

- **Will there be a future public consultation?**

We have already had one public consultation about what services people want at the hospital, this process is about making good on those promises. However, if the stakeholder panel recommends further consultation, or NHS Cambridgeshire wishes to commission enhanced services from Hinchingsbrooke, then an appropriate process will be agreed and delivered.

- **Who is going to manage the process?**

The process is being managed by the Strategic Projects team at NHS East of England, whose goal is to deliver business opportunities for the NHS in the region. This new team is headed up by Andrew MacPherson, Director of Strategic Projects. NHS East of England is working in close partnership with Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust and key local stakeholders in delivering the project.

- **Which services are affected by this process?**

This process will affect only those services provided by Hinchingsbrooke Health Care NHS Trust. Other services at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital site which are provided by other organisations are not part of this process.