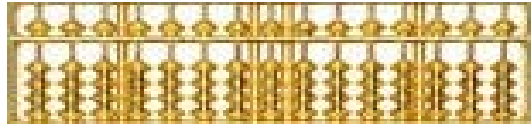


The Local Hospitals Observer



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An Open Letter to the new Chief Executive Officer of Hampshire NHS

May we welcome you to NHS Hampshire.

Having left the calamitous state of affairs at Dorset NHS behind, I think you will find that Hampshire is a golden pond of calm and stillness. The only noise that can be heard is that of Mrs Hebdens' slide projector telling us what we can not afford and the only work to be done is deciding where the next cinematograph display will take place, with tea and biscuits provided of course. We don't go in for rampaging hordes like our neighbours in Sussex and Dorset, though it may become the only course open to us, unless some degree of good practice can be brought to bear over the health care problems that are growing at an alarming rate in this particular area of S.E. Hampshire. It would seem that you have arrived in the nick of time!!

Whilst we assume that of course you have been fully apprised of the situation prevailing here, we hope you will excuse us if we reiterate some of the facts as they appear to us and that we would like you to please focus on, see later.

So before we delve into our particular woes, let us assure you that we fully understand that the NHS, not only here, but nationally, must change for ever in the light of modern thinking. It is obviously no coincidence that your Chairman, Professor Montgomery is an acclaimed expert in the field of health care law, and we express the hope that the law will be on the side of the stakeholder. He is also a member of the Medical Ethics Committee of the British Medical Association, so can we hope that medical ethics will be allowed to prevail in S. E. Hants.? Also, one of his major claims to fame is an article entitled, "Time for a paradigm shift" and it is quite clear that this is what is happening here. Are we to consider ourselves expendable mice in this social experiment? We have no objection to this; providing we can be assured that the experiment will not leave us without the right to have our say in shaping existing and future health and social care services. Professor Montgomery is on record as saying that it is a pity that there are not a few more members of the public at our meetings. Is he not aware of the many thousands of people that each councilor represents? There are plenty of them at every meeting. He should also be made aware that we are concerned at the lack of debate between members of the Board who sit in silence throughout, culminating in no attempt at a vote being taken; clearly indicating that only the Professors' view is what must prevail.

Health Secretary, the right Hon Andy Burnham MP has said "Our health and care services must reflect the needs of the community they serve". Quite clearly this is not happening in Hampshire, the policy for the last five years has been, since the treachery over the closure of the Emsworth Victoria Cottage Hospital, "This is what you are going to get, shut up and make the best of it". Is this a business plan? We were promised one, but it has not been seen yet? All this is despite the fact that five years ago we were in a growth scenario and under no pressure to make efficiencies. Why were we singled out to be so poorly treated?

However we are soon to be blessed with a new Head of the NHS. Possibly to be Sir Robert Naylor. He has stated that he believes the present cold blast of economic reality will be therapeutic for the health service, forcing the winnowing out of unnecessary bureaucratic layers (we could do with some of that) and combining hospitals into more specialized treatment centers. Sounds to us that he is made to measure for the Oak Park Hospital fiasco.

And so back to the figures:- It would seem that our Presbyterian friend at Westminster believes that The good folk of Hampshire are so rich that they do not need the same amount of NHS funding as the rest of the country. Therefore he has only allowed them 87% of the national average. This gives a shortfall of £201 per head. Multiply this by the Hampshire population figure at May 09 of 1,276,800 and it comes to £256,636,800 per year and of course rising rapidly. (Figures authenticated by your predecessor)

Seems to us that this figure of over 256 million pounds per year which has been politically stolen from us would go a long way towards building a new high tech specialized treatment centre, with beds, but not an old fashioned, fully blown hospital, on the land already designated for development, known as the Horse Fields, roughly opposite the Brookfield Hotel. Mid-way between Havant and Emsworth with excellent public transport, plenty of parking, on an A road with an already well enforced 30mph speed limit, but only a minute from the motorway.

So be brave, dump the ghastly mish-mash that is the current thinking, which would only have served to wreck a superb Care Centre for children, build tacky un-needed offices, note *offices*, leave a valuable building site in the middle of Havant, derelict for years, as proposed by your department and God only knows what is in store for the centre of Emsworth. More flats we suppose, for more people without decent health care facilities.

The Oak Park site could then be sold back to the Education Authority to re-build as a modern school which is also a critically much needed facility in this rapidly expanding corner of Hampshire. With the same stroke of the pen, the Children's' center which is currently so successful would be left unsullied, allowing it to eventually take up the current slack with the inevitable build up of the population. This inevitable build up of the population is an aspect that has been glaringly omitted from Mrs Hebdens' calculations throughout, as has been her reliance on a new Emsworth surgery being built at Hampshire Farm. Something that is highly unlikely to occur. A far more satisfactory scenario would be then to build a new modern surgery on the old Victoria Cottage Hospital site, very central, with bus stop, yards from its present position. This could even be connected to the present surgery building by a tunnel or footbridge. Statistics show that the average person will use such a facility over two thousand times in a lifetime, (source QMAE 2008/09 based on population of England of 50,064,883 and an average life expectancy of 79.8) doesn't seem like an extravagance to us. The existing elderly surgery building would be more cheaply converted to administration duties only, rather than to a modern surgery needing all the requirements of high tech. equipment. With Mrs Hebdens' valuation of the EVCH equivalent to the price of a modest house in Emsworth, I am sure our wonderful GPs would bite your hand off. Our financial researcher, who has been corresponding with your organization for many years, predating most of the current incumbents, has five years of meticulous research on file, which can be made available to you. Please apply. For a newcomer to this area we suggest this could be invaluable.

News Flash:- *"NHS computer blunder adds 2.3 Billion pounds to the NHS bill faced by the taxpayer"*.

The NHS is awash with money, but it needs to be spent efficiently, not squandered on layer upon layer of what used to be known as "Pen Pushers" and are now "Computer Crashers". But don't worry, taxes are set to go through the roof to recover all the money that has been squandered over the last thirteen years so you will soon be back in funds.

We deeply hope that you are prepared to establish a much more democratic relationship with your Stakeholders than has been evidenced in the past. Our next communication to you will contain interesting archive facts and figures which will be brought into the public domain and will ask two very important questions.

- 1) Why has the never viable and now abandoned, Oak Park Hospital fiasco been allowed to drag on for years with virtually no benefit to the locality and nothing to show for it except a derelict site and, no doubt, an enormous wage bill?
- 2) Why has the very well funded NHS been forced to borrow heavily and expensively from Bankers to buy a sticking plaster job for the ancient Queen Alexandra Hospital, which still suffers bed blocking, a great deal of criticism and is turning patients away daily?

Jim Cottis