

CONSULTATION REPLY COMMENTS – Not Supporting the Proposals

On the whole, do you support the proposal for the development of future public services in Herefordshire as outlined in this consultation document?

'I cannot see what advantages there are. Groups can make a point of working together without the PST. I am also not convinced of the long term results.' N001

'Why has the new Chief Executive post been advertised before consultation is completed. Is this a farce? No democratic accountability. Repeive three tier bureaucracy. Destroys position of elated Council.' N002

'I cannot answer Yes or No from the level of detail provided here. I need to see the figures and cash savings and the budgets being brought into the trust.' N003

'Added value for the customer is not demonstrated.' N004

'It is yet more reorganisation which I feel sure will bring more bureaucracy not less. I work for the PCT and many of my colleagues have low morale, feel undervalued and management seem incredibly remote. If the government changes in 2-3 years this could all change again. I have seen several reorganisations before the present PCT. What staff need and want is consolidation to give them chance to do their jobs without thinking what or when the next change will bring. I am not against change by think much more serious thought needs to be given to this. What I have heard and read so far is much 'High Thinking' but not very practical. Although the presentation on 25 July 2007 was well done, with eloquent speakers I think they do not realise the huge amount of detail the staff would have to take on board to be able to operate and communicate effectively.' N006

'Information, particularly financial, is too inadequate to make a judgement. You will do what you want to do anyway regardless of what anyone may say!' N007

'Lets hope this Government will get rid of all these then perhaps closer working arrangements can go forward. It's all about democracy.' N008

'There are too many other, mainly central government inspired initiatives under way at present. We do not need yet another complication that offers no guaranteed benefits.' N009

'1. The consultation document frequently refers to "savings" or "value for money" but nowhere is there any attempt at quantifying what savings are available. What is known is that costs are going up eg; a new Chief Executive at £175,000 plus employer's NIC plus pensions plus office and at least one PA no doubt. A likely overall costs of at least £250,000 a year. This is probably more than the present two CE's costs between them.

2. The "directors reporting to the new CE will undoubtedly argue that their new jobs are bigger so will call for and very probably get bigger salaries too.

3. The proposed PST has no legal status it is explained so it cannot employ anyone. So who employs the new CE?

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4. At a public meeting it was explained that existing staff will continue to be employed by their existing employers so how can they co-operate when they will be constantly trying to find out what each earns and whether HCC or PCT employees are better paid.

5. The proposed management structure is absurd in the extreme, far too big so it will all be talking shop. No doubt it's members will require support in organising meetings minutes etc so extra cost!

6. HCC and PCT have different reporting structures and are governed by different legislation so to the aforesaid talking shop will be added severe conflict of interests.

7. The discretionary spend available to either HCC or the PCT is limited in the extreme so that it is difficult to see what scope for re-ordering priorities exists.

8. There is already a timetable in place with a completion date of 1st of April and the new CE job already advertised thus "consultation" is a farce and an insult to the taxpayers who are forced to fund these schemes.

9. If the rationale relates to the point that both HCC and PCT outsource more and more of their work then consider that the Government led by Gordon Brown is already pressing for less outsourcing no more. Some PCT's are already cancelling deals with, for example, BUPA clinics (cf Surrey).

10. Finally why cannot the staff of both bodies co-operate already where it matters in social care? You won't ask doctors to mend roads or dustmen to be care assistants will you?' N010

'I do not "favour one size fits all." Is the Primary Care Trust board the same people that say there is no problem with national health dentists? N011

'Herefordshire Council is essentially a political body and should not be involved in commissioning healthcare.' N012

'Historically the Council has proved corporately inept.' N013

'Costs will become more important than care.' N014

'Not convinced co-ordination of commissioning requires PST.' N015

'I believe that Health Services should be provided by committed health professionals and not left to politicians.' N016

'Too large scale to begin with. Yes to health, social care and leisure but far too wide reaching to start this process.' N017

'I fear that, in the long run, the majority of funding would end up in the back of the Council. I also fear more political interference in the provision of health services.' N018

'Costs will escalate significantly, Internal processes will increase, sloppy inefficient working will increase.' N019

'Far too top heavy from Executive point of view. I do not like political interference with suggested new Public Service Trust.' N020

'Government proposals regarding polyclinics specialist hospitals will involve re-thinking of Health provision. The role of PCT is not clear. No need for public service at present time.' N021

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'PCT have managed budget well and have kept things in the black. This is not the case with Herefordshire Council – therefore the Council will drain PCT funding.' N022

'Another layer of bureaucracy does not deal with real issues ie; inadequate resources for the demand.' N023

'More people more trouble.' N024

'There are already too many administration staff within the NHS and Council. As this proposal does not involve community hospitals and mental health services I can see no benefit from it – apart from creating new posts.' N025

'I believe that this will result in the deterioration and quality of services and care, and money becomes priority. I have seen this happen before.' N026

'Council tax money used to subsidise health service budget.' N027

'The track record of the Council is not impressive – I am unsure joining with the PCT will not be of any benefit to the people of Hereford.' N028

'What consultation? This is just an expensive list.' N029

'Concerned that a strategic body and a government appointed one will find it difficult to work together.' N030

'The culture of the two organisations are too different. I fear an unmanageable structure will be developed. I don't think that enough detail is in place regarding practicalities.' N031

'More bureaucracy. Heaven knows how many people in offices are paid colossal sums of money which would be better used where it is intended. Not in the Chief's pocket.' N033

'Your document makes frequent reference to cost savings in its proposals and 'better value for money for taxpayers' but there is scant evidence for how this will be achieved. When I was involved in similar studies, Treasury rules required all our reports to be supported by full investment appraisals detailing the precise cost savings and the method of achievement. Without such evidence nothing received the sanction to proceed.' N034

'Larger the organisation the less efficient it becomes.' N035

'NHS experience has proved large managerial structures do not improve service to the public.' N036

'A monolithic structure is hardly likely to improve services – in fact the reverse. Was it designed by a first year MBA student?' N037

'The document is poor. The case studies are fatuous – did you actually speak to real staff?' N038

'The Council is an elected body and therefore subject to democratic process. The PCT has no such checks and balances. The proposal is against public interest.' N039

'Personally, I can see no benefit to be gained by the individual, from the merge.'
N040

'We wish to register our objections to the creation of the Public Service Trust for Herefordshire. Our objections are admirably described by Mr Jesse Norman in his comments printed in the Hereford Times of 26th July.' N041

'The overlap between the two services is very limited and the prospect of lead costs means savings are doubtful.' N042

'Members of the Council have attended a Meeting and examined documents available for the proposed merger consultation process. The Parish Council wishes to express it's dismay at the way this has been presented. What are you proposing represents a major change in procedure, purporting to bring cost cutting, increased efficiency and major savings. Yet the amount of detailed factual information provided is minimal. There are no details of a properly evaluated and costed programme. A simplistic "yes/no" answer would be meaningless. This Council opposes the proposed merger. It can come to no other conclusion on the basis of the insufficient information provided. The Council would also like to question the detailed personal information your questionnaire asks for. What possible relevance can this have?'
N043

'The political influence, cost and there have been far too many changes imposed already.' N044

'Not enough thought is given to the Service User who in many instances is elderly and vulnerable. It all seems management and money led. I also think that you view service users as statistics and not real people.' N045

'Another layer of bureaucracy' N047

'More money, more waste – just get on with the job. We want better services.' N048

'This document says nothing – it's just window dressing – rubbish!' N049

'I cannot possibly say without considering more information. A brave idea but we lack enough detail to comment realistically.' N051

'Not all services integrated. An extra level of management together with Local Politicians on the Board which could change direction every four years on new elections.' N053

'This will introduce a further layer of bureaucracy into an already bureaucratic system. An abundant waste of public money.' N054

'We have talked of this proposal with some care and report the following; There are some clear areas of conjunction around Social Services that would be better served. There are many areas where we cannot find the benefits of reorganisation. Our experience of public bodies getting bigger and bigger is not encouraging. Your diagram on page five clearly shows the creation of an additional body rather than a reduction. In spite of your words we fear the creation of more layers of management, more bureaucracy, and more meetings of people sitting round drinking coffee, less useful results. While the NHS shows clear signs of obesity in it's affairs, we think deeper links can only be detrimental to Herefordshire Council. There

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is already the Herefordshire partnership which we think should be capable of most of what you propose. Periods of amalgamation are historically followed in time by periods of devolution.’ N056

‘It seems to me that it will lead to another layer of bureaucracy without any tangible benefits.’ N057

‘Hereford DC has finally ‘settled down’ after severance from Worcestershire. Another reorganisation is the last thing that it needs. The proposal is untried and is likely to be costly. This is not the county to experiment with taxpayers money.’ N058

‘Health professionals do their best for us. Social Services are always on the lookout for loopholes to do the least they can get away with and reduce services if they can. Vulnerable people should fear this partnership as we will lose the fact that we have someone “on our side” against social services.’ N059

Herefordshire Council and the existing PCT are two totally separate organisations with separate aims and public responsibilities. No satisfactory case has been made to show that their amalgamation and joint working arrangements will benefit either the organisations themselves, or more importantly, the people they are intended to serve. Professional accountabilities differ between individuals and across organisations. Evidence to substantiate the level of savings required to support the scheme is largely unsubstantiated. The level and nature of costs incurred is contrary to the statement on savings from ‘economics of scale’ identified on page sixteen of the consultation paper. It is reported that officers have progressed the scheme without adequate reference to Councillors as public representatives. Introduction of a further layer of bureaucracy will do nothing to improve or streamline the services currently being offered. In addition, there is no evidence that the changes will achieve greater efficiency. There is no reference or evidence as to how other statutory responsibilities will be adequately fulfilled under this arrangement, for example the public scrutiny committee, responsibility for Governance. The move is premature, given the guidance awaited on the provider side or primary care services outlined in section fifteen of the consultation paper. The stated purpose of moving the purchasing and provision of health services under the auspice of Primary Care is apparently intended to recognise that these were inextricably interwoven. To dismiss the Government’s sentiment for the convenience of this consultation is unjustified and unacceptable. Statements made in this regard in sections nine and fifteen appear to be contradictory. Public presentations have been poorly made and inappropriately presented to promote understanding by lay personnel. This has prompted scepticism as to ‘lip service’ being paid to the public interest, and has undermined confidence in the consultation process. Councillors have asked that, at the conclusion of the consultation process, details of comments and feedback received should be published.’ N060

‘Little evidence available in the consultation document, or at the public meeting, that even basic planning has taken place. Even the few figures given do not add up for example, Council affordable revenue is £122m against Council contribution of £138m. 138 is not 70% of 122!’ N063

‘Didn’t understand the document, how will it work?’ N064

‘I am very unclear about how this is going to work in practice. I am also very concerned about the role of the GP in all this which appears to be pivotal.’ N066

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'The idea is good but I have grave doubts as to whether amalgamation will work. The case has not been made for a successful working partnership.' N067

'This proposal, if carried, will simply add another layer of offices to the already overstuffed PCT and County Council. Talk of a salary a year of £175,000 plus per year for another Chief Executive plus the cost of many more hundreds of Officers would not be sustainable. We are a small county in population with a growing old age percentage.' N068

'Elected and unelected organisations do not mix. Bureaucracy covering GPs and Highways is ridiculous.' N069

'No information on costs/savings. No comparison given between current and proposed plans. Needs support of FHS practitioners – none of the dentists opticians or pharmacists I spoke to have heard of the PST.' N071

'Despite searching out the full discussion document on this proposal and reading it with care I can find no hard data to support your assertion that money would be saved or better allocated. The fact that significant parts of both organisations' work will not be commissioned jointly suggests that what will happen will be to add another layer of bureaucracy rather than save on management costs. There will also be a natural tendency to try and move (pinch) funds from one area to cover shortfalls in others that are funded from central government via another route. e.g. the recent 'top slicing' of PCT funds to cover shortfalls by other health trusts. In fighting between departments will continue particularly where little natural affiliation can be seen e.g. planning and highways vs dental services or dementia services etc separate. Possibly an interesting idea but as they say the devil is always in the detail---and nobody seems to be spelling any of this out. It should be noted that the idea was generated in great part as a political way of maintaining Hereford as a separate PCT. This has been achieved and with a change in 'regime' at No 10 management suggests that the NHS may be spared further changes in management structure for a while. Therefore I am of the opinion that this public service trust should not be continued with. The Questionnaire does not appear to be available on-line and even if it was I find some of the feedback sections offensive. There is no authorship of the document and no list of possible conflicts of interest stated nor ethnic backgrounds of those involved.'

'I would like to add my voice to oppose the proposed merger between the local council and PCT. While there may be some short term economic benefits, the shortfall in democratic accountability and further erosion of social capital is too high a price to pay'

'(Sent on Miss Reid's behalf) Miss Reid is concerned that combining PCT and Council spending will cause a drift away from health and education spending.'

Please describe any other ideas you have for how the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust and Herefordshire Council might better work together to improve public service?

'Ensuring that each side works with the other, have joint working groups to understand each other's remits and working practices. Communication is the key to everything.' N001

'They can enter into joint purchasing contracts without all this bureaucratic nonsense and work together as now where health and education needs intersect.' N002

'Work closely and co-operate as happens now to a large extent. Why change what generally works well. Will there be a pruning of management? I believe much could be done to reduce the huge amount of administration.' N006

'Concentrate on providing good essential services and on giving the voluntary sector the credit it deserves for making good facilities a statutory provision.' N009

'Some things need to be in the care of people on the spot for example; medical, hospital hygiene, housing and highways. People with technical knowledge of their subject not some faceless board.' N011

'Partnership Working.' N015

'I believe the PCT should negotiate with Health Service providers in surroundings counties.' N016

'I have recently seen amazing co-operation between social services, hospitals, GP, rehab until and voluntary organisations in relation to the elderly in East Sussex and think this the way forward.' N017

'Have confirmed executive meetings regularly so that each body could better understand the operations and problems of the other.' N018

'Provide offices in common but not entire buildings.' N019

'Greater Co-operation in long term case. Social Services and PCT need clearly defined aims and roles. Needs of elderly and disabled citizens warrant greater resources.' N021

'Should remain separate by more joined up working especially in the case of mental health.' N022

'The main problem is inadequate Social services provision in the community. Another tact shot does not solve this.' N023

'Health is health, living is living. One group mixes and gets half the job done.' N024

'Increased salaries for good health care workers. Hence increase numbers to provide more case in people's homes. Support more people in their own homes.' N025

'Keeping them separate would be of most value to the people – but not for those employed long term – no one benefits except of course Senior Management!' N028

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'Find me an NHS dentist and I might believe you.' N029

'Better communication might help less self indulgence and I am syndrome will also help.' N033

'In essence your proposals for a Public Services Trust Arrangement would institute a new tier of bureaucracy, with a high paid chief executive, to serve the PCT and Council. A better way forward would be to keep the PCT and the Council separate by to draw up a list of all the areas where they share services and responsibilities. An individual report, supported by an investment appraisal, should then be commissioned into each area of overlap with the aim of giving either the PCT of the Council the lead responsibility for the provision of that service for both bodies. If each body, for example, had 10 staff involved in the provision of a particular service, it may be that 15 staff could provide the same service for both from a single location. In sum, this way forward has been proved to work, would be less disruptive than your current proposals and the efficiencies and cost savings would be more transparent.' N034

'Herefordshire has many dependants on its services and few to pick up the bill. Money therefore needs to come from the government.' N035

'You don't need something new to improve your working relationships – just get on with it and stop prevaricating. How long is it since you last reorganised – yes well that says everything? It's a really good way of not doing anything.' N038

'The benefits could easily and cost-effectively be achieved by co-operation between the organisations.' N042

'Keep health local so that people know their GPs, Dentist, Therapists etc.' N044

'Speak and listen to the people at ground level, for example Social Workers, homecare and even outside agencies, who provide assistance. They are the people who have to deal with the mess which is usually made.' N045

'Just work properly together and stop reorganising.' N048

'Stop wasting money.' N052

'Closer management committee with Officers with no consolidation budgets.' N053

'By concentrating on the needs of Council tax payers and patients first, their employees second and the career prospects of their managers not at all.' N054

'Do what they are paid to do in a more professional manner.' N057

'A properly run joint study can come up with this answer after proper consultation and then any necessary "tweaking" for "joined-up" working can be addressed. An amalgamation is several steps to far. This is all to much of a tearing hurry.' N058

'The partnership will be judge and jury. I note that aim two on page five admits that one of the aims is "achieving savings" without the support of their health professionals, vulnerable people will suffer even more than they are already, in order to keep Herefordshire Council costs down.' N059

'Stop closing hospitals and cut red tape.' N061

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'Implement existing community care plan properly and in a timely and efficient way with the needs of the individual foremost. Your proposal shows no evidence that any additional fund of resources will result.' N063

'I think they need to be kept as separate entities but agree there needs to be improvement in joint working practices. This could be achieved by looking at models from other areas or more consultation with employees at the workplace.' N066

'It is obvious that the claims that Herefordshire Council and the PCT are the largest employers in the County does not mean that they are the most efficient. I spent 35 years of my business life improving the efficiency of many motor companies in the UK. I did not do this by taking on more staff.' N068

'A co-ordinating committee should be sufficient.' N069

'Work more creatively within the existing provisions for joint commissioning. Managers need to talk to consult with and listen to those actually delivering services.'
N071