Happy New Year and welcome to the eighth edition of the Bicester Community Hospital Project Newsletter. Through this newsletter we hope to keep all local people and organisations updated on the progress of the project.

New Community Forum for Bicester

A new forum called the Community Hospital Engagement Forum (CHEF) has held its first meeting. Chaired by retired Bicester GP, Dr. Michael Curry, the CHEF formed after a public meeting in November which was attended by more than 100 people. During this meeting people came forward to be part of the new forum which will give the community of Bicester and surrounding areas, a direct way of commenting on and taking part in the plans to redevelop their community hospital. At its first meeting in December, two members of the CHEF, Chair Dr Curry and Cherwell District Councillor, Cllr David Hughes, were nominated to represent the group on NHS Oxfordshire’s Bicester Project Group. This will give the CHEF direct involvement with the decision making body. Dr Curry said: “The formation of the CHEF gives local people a proper way of informing the NHS on the future of their local healthcare. We have 17 representatives who are a good cross section of the community and our first meeting was forthright, realistic and pragmatic.” He continued: “I believe we will play a crucial and meaningful role in influencing how the project progresses, for instance the CHEF has already made it clear that we want a hospital on one site with all its current services, and that the building must be so designed as to allow for expansion and changes of use as future needs arise.” The CHEF will now meet bi-monthly or more frequently if needed. There are also plans to hold more general public meetings in the near future. For more information please see NHS Oxfordshire’s website: www.oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk (look under news briefings)

Ambitious about improving the health and wellbeing of local people
**Project Update**

NHS Oxfordshire is about to start a process called ‘Invitation to Participate in Dialogue’ (ITPD) This means we will start to talk to would-be developers who are interested in and qualified to work on the project to build new health facilities. We then expect to carry on with these discussions over the summer and hope to put forward a recommendation to NHS Oxfordshire’s Board in November this year. Subject to planning permission we would then hope work can start on the new hospital in the summer of 2011.

Project Manager, Tony Burrage, said: “We are now a long way down the road on this project and are progressing well. NHS Oxfordshire remains very committed to the scheme. I’m looking forward to working with the Community Forum to ensure we get the right facilities for Bicester and the surrounding areas.”

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**What facilities will the new hospital have?**

The new hospital will provide all the existing healthcare services and therapies, which will include an out-patients clinic, a minor injuries unit, X-ray, as well as 11 intermediate care beds. Potential developers can suggest providing the new facilities on the existing Bicester Hospital site, or at another site, for example, to the SW of Bicester, where significant development is anticipated. Services may be provided together in one unit, similar to the model we currently have at Bicester Hospital. Alternatively, services might be offered in different locations. It’s important to remember though, that which ever plan goes ahead, all current healthcare services will continue.

**I've heard we are losing beds, is this true?**

No, the new hospital will provide all the services currently in existence at Bicester – including the current 11 intermediate care beds.

**Bicester’s population is set to increase, don’t we need a larger hospital?**

The population of Bicester is due to increase significantly in the years ahead and this is a key consideration in selecting the most suitable location for a facility. We need to ensure that there is space to grow and develop the new facility so that it can continue to meet the needs of Bicester and its surrounding villages both now and in the future.

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† This newsletter is distributed to the following stakeholders: PCT staff, local MPs, local NHS trusts, Bicester Town Council, Cherwell District Council, the Local Practice Based Commissioning Consortia, the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board, South Central Strategic Health Authority, Oxfordshire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, patients and public in the Bicester locality – including LINk organisation (Local Involvement Networks), relevant community and voluntary groups and the media.

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