

10th May 2010

## **DEVELOPMENT OF BLANDFORD COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

It is the understanding of the Friends of Blandford Community Hospital that the Community Services (Provider Arm) of NHS Dorset needs to make savings of £8million in the next year to deal with the financial problems of the Trust. This results in Blandford Hospital having to make savings of £400,000.

One significant efficiency saving suggested by the Director of Provider Services at the Trust, Tim Archer, is to combine the inpatients beds into one 24 bedded unit on the first floor of the hospital. This would involve the closure of the Portman Ward and it's incorporation into the current Tarrant Ward. The Trust suggest this will improve patient care and result in cost efficiencies without any staff redundancies.

The Friends, who have supported the hospital's activities for 62 years, along with many staff are very much opposed to this proposition and continue to see Portman Ward as the historic foundation of the hospital and a very strong asset. Portman has access to the garden, views of the bowling green, and has recently received much investment from the Friends. Indeed the current project of transforming the dated conservatory into a purpose built, year round sun room is nearing completion at a cost of £82,500 from the Friends' funds. The refurbishment of the Family Units, another essential resource, particularly in the provision of palliative care is another project recently funded through the Friends for this specific purpose. This ambience creates an ideal environment for patient comfort and recovery as witnessed by the many letters of thanks received.

The Friends have obtained the agreement of Tim Archer to commission a feasibility study on an alternative proposal for the future of the hospital. This would involve a 24 bedded unit based in the current Portman Ward. As a result the operating theatre would need to move to the first floor but this relocation could facilitate it's further development resulting in securing theatre work appropriate to the local area and facilities available. The Friends feel this would have long term benefits for the future care of patients dealing with their individual needs and have the flexibility to adapt to any future health needs and development in methods of treatment.

With no NHS capital available for the development of the hospital the Trustees of the Friends would consider funding the considerable costs of such a scheme in order to reconfigure the hospital and meet the future needs of patients, enabling care to be given as close to home as possible, which is one of the prime goals of the NHS.

The feasibility study will be undertaken by the PCT design team and the Friends sincerely hope that NHS Dorset honour the agreement and await the outcome of the study before embarking on any further moves to make changes in Blandford.