

# JOINT MORETONHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL AND MORETONHAMPSTEAD HEALTH CENTRE PUBLIC MEETING

5th November 2025, Parish Hall Moretonhampstead, 7pm

## MINUTES

### Attendees

#### Panel

Moretonhampstead Parish Council: Cllr Catherine Fileman Wright, Chair, Cllr Janette Evans Vice-chair

Moretonhampstead Health Centre: Dr Tom Waterfall, Alex Austin,

North East Dartmoor (NED) Care: John Willis

Moretonhampstead Development Trust (Wellmoor): Richard Foxwell

Other Parish Council Members attending: Cllr Richard Short, Cllr Vivienne Hodges, Cllr Mike Jeffery,

Teignbridge DC: Cllr John Farrand Rogers

Dartmoor National Park Authority: Dean Kinsella, Director of Planning

Apologies: NHS Property Services and Cllr Richard Keeling, Devon County Council

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Fileman-Wright explained that the panel are all members of the working group set up to examine the sale and transfer of the Moretonhampstead Hospital. They are a point of contact for the NHS and represent the community but have no decision-making responsibilities in relation to the future of the hospital.

### 2. Purpose of the meeting

Cllr Fileman Wright explained that the purpose of the meeting was to:

- Let residents know the latest information about what is happening to Moretonhampstead Hospital and hear residents' views of the closure and ideas they may have for the future of the hospital
- To answer questions, and if this is not possible to pass them to the NHS or other organisations to answer
- Help inform what further representations the Parish Council, Health Centre, Wellmoor, NED Care and others make to the NHS / MP etc.

### 3. Update

Cllr Fileman Wright updated the meeting on what has happened at the hospital. The update is in Annex 1 of these minutes.

Following the update, Dr Tom Waterfall informed the meeting that the leak in the roof had been fixed since the hospital was vacated. The District Nurses had received only 4 weeks' notice to leave the building.

Dr Waterfall also stated that there was an implication by the NHS that the building was closed as limited services were being provided there, it was the NHS that had decided to withdraw services from the hospital over a period of years.

The NHS contract with GP practices is set annually. The contract doesn't take account of the need to develop services to meet the long-term health care needs of communities over the next 20 years.

#### **4. Questions and Answers**

**Q1. Does the group know whether there are any government departments likely to take over the property.**

This information would only be known to NHS PS and we would not expect them to share that with us. If no organisations come forward in the first 3-6 months, we expect it will go on the open market.

**Q2. A member of the district nursing team that was based in the hospital said that in 1997 money was raised to support the hospital and asked what happened to that.**

The money was donated to help support users of NED Care and to Moretonhampstead, Chagford and Cheriton Bishop Health Centres / GPs. John Willis from NED Care confirmed they had received some of the funding from the League of Friends as it had been disbanded. Dr Waterfall stated that the Moretonhampstead Health Centre still had some of the money and it continues to be used to benefit the needs of patients.

**Q3. A member of the public stated that they understood the land on which the building stood was donated to the Community and people of Moretonhampstead and therefore could the building be sold?**

Investigations with Land Registry do not substantiate this. The working group has not managed to find any documents or records that suggest ownership other than by the NHS.

**Q4. What does the term Community mean in relation to hospital ownership?**

Cllr Fileman-Wright explained it's not clear what this means in practice. Cllr Short explained that the Land Registry shows that the NHS owns the land. The hospital would have been transferred in 1946 to the NHS; and that there were no distinctions made at that time for previous ownership; and that no covenants are recorded on the registered title. The hospital land was registered in 1991. Land registration only became compulsory in 1990 by law.

Cllr. Jeffries also explained that 40 years ago the parish council attempted to define the ownership but no records were found.

The member of the district nursing team said that Dr Tim Dudgeon might have more information, as he put his house up as collateral to help raise money to refurbish the hospital and secure its future. Dr Tom Waterfall will ask Dr Dudgeon for further information.

**Q5. Is there anything the community/public can do regarding the needs of Moretonhampstead?**

Dr Waterfall said that although both the Health Centre, Wellmoor and others have been setting out a long-term vision for health services in this community to NHS Devon it was not having any influence. Members of the public could help by lobbying our MP, Rt Hon Sir Mel Stride, and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Rt Hon Wes Streeting, MP to help raise the profile of the hospital and health needs of this community (see Annex 2 of these minutes).

**Q6. If the building was bought by the Community, would work be needed immediately - and would there be any engagement with the NHS**

Cllr Fileman-Wright noted that purchasing the hospital would require a substantial grant and loan, meaning the building would need to generate a return or income as soon as possible.

Neither the Council nor MDT Board of Trustees could make a financial commitment of the scale required. It would be an unacceptable financial risk. For the parish council it would workout at an investment of £1,000 per person in the parish; and this did not take account of on-going running costs. This would be unmanageable for the council and our residents.

John Willis has investigated St.Ives, Cornwall community buy-out of their hospital for health and well-being activities. They had money available from their League of Friends, had fundraised and had also taken out a loan. But they were finding it challenging to find enough occupants for the buildings but they did have some health services there funded by the NHS.

**Q7. Is the hospital a Listed building?**

Cllr Short stated that the hospital is not a Listed building, but it is a non-designated heritage asset. That means it has some heritage value that needs consideration in the planning process. Any planning application for physical works or involving the loss of the building needs to be accompanied by a statement of heritage significance against which any loss of value can be justified.

The parish council has kept Dartmoor National Park Authority updated on the hospital as they would have to be involved in any planning / change of use.

Dean Kinsella from the Dartmoor National Park confirmed that Cllr Short was correct. Heritage England is responsible for designation of a building as 'Listed' and would account for the state of the building.

Cllr Short also explained that the hospital is outside the conservation area, but an application could be made to Dartmoor National Park to designate it as conservation area. Dean Kinsella replied this was possible, it would need consultation but would take time.

**Q8. In 1997 Dr Tim Dudgeon organised fundraising of £300,000 to refurbish the Hospital and put his house as collateral. There was an agreement with the NHS that if the hospital was ever sold this money would be returned to the community.**

If there is documentation to please let the working group know.  
Dr Tom Waterfall will also ask Dr Dudgeon about this.

**Q9. How can people help raise awareness of the issues with the hospital and health services?**

Cllr Fileman-Wright stated the parish council had written to Sir Mel Stride, MP and is awaiting a reply. She and Cllr Walden are planning to visit him at his constituency surgery. She said if members of the public were concerned, they should write to Sir Mel, Wes Streeting, and the NHS.

A member of the public requested a standard letter, but it was explained by another member of public that when organisations receive standard letters they aren't necessarily treated as seriously.

A member of the public suggested an online petition. Cllr Fileman-Wright said the working group and parish council will investigate this.

See Annex 2 for names and addresses.

**Q10. If no organisations came forward in the first 3-6 months, and the hospital went on the open market, could the community buy it then, to avoid having to go through the bureaucracy of the limited government sale?**

It was explained by members of the working group that whatever stage a community buy-out was attempted there would need to be a business case. Significant money would have to be raised through funding, loans and grants, as well as all the survey, full assessment of work needed to refurbish the building and other legal work for property sales.

Organisations that give grants or make loans all expect full business cases and would assess the finances of organisations applying for funding.

Cllr Evans stated that a bid of this magnitude could take up to 6 months to prepare a business case and grant applications of this scale.

Alex Austin said that while it was clear from the meeting that the community wished to retain the building and services, money would have to be raised / found for both for initial bid and for ongoing maintenance and running costs.

**Q11. Could the building or land be used for other purposes e.g. care home or affordable housing.**

Dr. Waterfall asked Dean Kinsella whether this would be feasible. Dean replied that DNP could try to influence how the building is used through the planning process. DNPA would take into account whether a building was listed, in a conservation area, and would consider a change of use for the building.

**Q12. Why are the time frames for selling the hospital so short?**

Cllr Fileman-Wright explained that this is NHS Property Services' policy and applies across the country.

Richard Foxwell said that it was clear from this meeting that the community wished to keep the building and services. To do this it was necessary to find people / organisation with the expertise, funding and commitment to take this on.

**Q13. How a community buyout could be achieved?**

Cllr Fileman Wright explained that we would need a charity/ organisation to apply; a business plan; funds available to purchase the building and to run it once bought. There would need to be people / organisations committed to using the building to generate income.

**Q14. Could a larger charity be found to support this?**

Cllr Fileman-Wright said that if anyone had connections with larger charities who might be interested then please let the parish council know.

**Q15 What is being done with maintenance of the hospital garden as it is becoming untidy and large bushes are overhanging the pavement.**

Cllr Fileman-Wright will raise with the NHS.

**Q16 Should people in neighbouring communities be told about the hospital?**

Cllr Fileman-Wright said that our parish clerk had let all the neighbouring parish councils know about the meeting and advertised it on social media, and in the News in Moreton.

Cllr Evans urged people at this meeting to tell others what is happening to the hospital and to write their MP as it is important for members of the community to raise the profile of this issue.

## **5. Summary and Next Steps**

Cllr Fileman-Wright thanked everyone for attending. She said the next step is when the hospital goes up for sale. From this meeting, it is clear that while the community wants to keep the hospital and services, there are significant challenges to this.

If anyone has any past documents relating to the ownership and passed community fundraising for the hospital; or knows of a larger charity who might be interested in the building, please contact the parish council.

Dr Waterfall will contact Dr Dudgeon to ask him about the issues raised during the meeting.

Cllr Fileman-Wright will raise maintenance of the hospital grounds with the NHS.

The working group will be meeting NHS Devon soon to update them on this meeting.

Annex 2 of the minutes contains contact details for MPs, and NHS Devon.

**The meeting closed at 8.45pm**

### **Annex 1 Moretonhampstead Hospital Update**

The Parish Council, Health Centre, Wellmoor and NED Care were made aware by the NHS Property Services that they were considering selling the hospital in February 2024 at a meeting hosted by Mel Stride MP.

In February 2024 the hospital had an Ulcer Clinic and office space for NHS District Nurses. The Health Centre occasionally used a room in the hospital on an informal basis.

North East Dartmoor Care, the community-run charity that provides care to people in their homes, was also based there.

The hospital building is owned and managed by NHS Property Services, which is a national government-owned company. This is separate to Devon NHS Integrated Care Board, which decides what services it needs where for people in Devon.

The Health Centre has never had and still has nothing to do with the running of Moretonhampstead Hospital and the building. However, the Health Centre with Wellmoor and other local organisations have been very active for many years in discussions with the NHS Devon about the health services we need in this community.

The reason given by NHS Property Services for needing to close the hospital was that it was unsafe due to water in the building from a leaking roof. The cost of repairs (which NHS PS estimated at £500k-£1m). In their view NHS Devon was not making sufficient use of the building to justify repairs. That meant NHS Devon would have to look for alternative arrangements for the District Nurses, and the Ulcer Clinic.

We set up a working group - MPC, the Health Centre, Wellmoor and NED Care. Our role is to provide a point of contact with the NHS Devon and NHS Property Services.

The working group has also looked at what other communities have done in similar circumstances, and tried to get better information on the state of the hospital building and the possibilities of continuing health services in the hospital.

By June 2025 the NHS Devon let us know that District Nurses had moved to office space in the town, and the ulcer clinic would now be provided at home. By then NED Care had moved to an office in The Square.

In July NHS Property Services formally closed the hospital. There are no services there and no access for the public.

On 23rd July the NHS Devon and NHS Property Services hosted a meeting in the Parish Hall to explain what happens next.

The next steps for the sale of the hospital are:

- NHS PS will put the hospital up for sale via limited advert for government departments, local authorities, and community organisations and groups. Community groups must be a registered charity
- the initial advert will be for a period of 3 months in which time any interested party must submit a viable business plan
- any interested party will then have a further 3 months to demonstrate the financial viability of their plan
- if no bidders come forward during this period, the hospital will be placed on the open market.
- Once the sale has gone through, 50% of the moneys received (after costs) will go back to NHS Devon to be reinvested in NHS properties in Devon.

NHS PS has not confirmed when the sale process will start or what the asking price for the building will be.

The working group thinks the purchase could be around £300-500k but significant investment is also needed to repair and refurbish the building.

The NHS PS has made it clear they welcome community bids for the building as part of their formal process. However the working group is not aware of any local organisations in a position to purchase the hospital. Neither the Parish Council, MDT Board of Trustees nor NED Care would have the funding or expertise to purchase and manage the hospital building.

The Health Centre has also looked at the possibility of purchasing the hospital as a replacement for the GP practice. But this does not appear to be financially viable for the practice.

This is because the NHS would designate the hospital as a new-build GP practice meaning it would have to be refurbished to modern clinical standards at an estimated cost of £1m, on top of any purchase price. There is also no guarantee of any more NHS services or funding coming to the practice were they to make this investment.

The next thing we expect to hear is that when the hospital is advertised on government website.

## **Annex 2 Useful Names and Addresses**

### Rt Hon Sir Mel Stride, MP

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Email Address: [mel.stride.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:mel.stride.mp@parliament.uk)

### Rt Hon Wes Streeting, MP

Secretary of State

Department of Health and Social Care

39 Victoria St

London

SW1H 0EU

*Please note: if members of the public wish to write to politicians it is more effective to go via your local MP. This is because ministers are shown letters that MPs receive, whereas letters to ministers from members of the public tend to be answered by civil servants.*

### NHS Devon

Steve Moore, Chief Executive

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