

260707 – Item 14 - Moretonhampstead Hospital Update

1. Introduction

This paper provides an update on the future of Moretonhampstead's Community Hospital and makes recommendations for the parish council's next steps.

2. Recommendations

As the project moves to the next stage, the parish council needs to review its role in securing the future of Moretonhampstead Hospital.

It is recommended that:

2.1 The parish council chairs one final meeting of the current Hospital Working Group to formally disband it and establishes a new working group (see section 4) to take forward the preparation of a community bid and, ultimately, the running of the hospital building. The parish council would not be represented on the new working group.

2.2 The parish council's position should be to:

- support a credible community bid to obtain the hospital for use as a health and well-being hub
- listen to and communicate with the community about the future of the hospital, consistent with the council's responsibilities
- make representations on behalf of the community, where appropriate (e.g., updating our MP; planning matters).

2.3 Day-to-day decisions about actions in line with this position should be delegated to the Chair, Vice-Chair, Cllr Walden, and Clerk, with updates provided to the parish council as required.

3. Progress

The Hospital Working Group (MPC, Moretonhampstead Health Center, MDT Wellmoor, and NED Care) worked with Global City Futures to prepare a business case and campaign video for the hospital to be transferred back to the community for a nominal sum, to be used as a health and well-doing hub. <https://moretonhampstead-pc.gov.uk/news/information-shared-on-the-future-of-moretonhampstead-hospital/>

The petition to save the hospital continues to gather public support, with 2,125 signatures at the time of writing.

The working group presented the business case on 4 June 2026 to the Rt Hon Sir Mel Stride, MP; Mat Chetwynd, Director NHS Devon and James Page, NHS Property Services. The chair of Dartmoor Futures also attended.

The NHS confirmed that they cannot hand over the hospital for a nominal fee but are willing to negotiate. Sir Mel Stride MP advised that it is unlikely the NHS position will change due to NHS legislation and Treasury rules governing the disposal of government-owned property.

The NHS also confirmed that they would be willing to treat a community bid as the preferred (sole) bidder, subject to:

- the bid being led by a community organisation with at least three years of annual accounts
- the organisation demonstrating that it can raise the necessary funding to purchase the hospital
- any transfer being concluded by end of March 2027.

NHS Property Services has confirmed that they will allow access to the hospital to complete a survey and obtain estimates of maintenance and running costs once a lead organisation is confirmed.

4. What happens next?

Taking back control of the hospital and re-opening it remains a significant challenge for a community of this size.

To make the project viable, sufficient funding would need to be raised by March 2027 to purchase the hospital and carry out any essential maintenance to allow it to re-open.

MDT, under its new Chair and Board of Trustees, is considering whether it could act as the lead organisation for the community bid. However, MDT does not wish to run the hospital if it is acquired for the community.

A new organisation (a charity or a not-for-profit community interest company) would therefore need to be in place by April 2027 to manage the hospital as a health and well-being hub and begin generating income as soon as possible after any purchase.

Between now and April 2027, a re-formed Hospital Working Group would act as the shadow board for the new organization, with a chair and membership capable of developing the bid, fundraising (via MDT) and establishing the new organisation to run the hospital.

MDT has contacted the Charity Commission for advice on the best way to achieve this.

The parish council, health centre and NED Care have all previously confirmed that they are not in a position to develop a bid or run the hospital building.

5. Implications for the parish council

To date, Cllr Fileman-Wright has chaired the Hospital Working Group, and the parish council has played a key role liaising with the NHS, our MP, DNPA, hosting a public meeting, and ensuring the NHS took our community's concerns seriously.

The parish council should now disband the working group in its current form, and hand over to a new working group as described in section 4. Membership of the new working group has not yet been agreed.

Once the parish council has stepped back from the current working group, its position and role would be to:

- support a credible community bid to obtain the hospital for health and well-being hub
- listen to and communicate with the community about the future of the hospital, consistent with the council's responsibilities
- make representations on behalf of the community, where appropriate (e.g., updating our MP; planning matters).

Any decisions about actions required in line with this position would be delegated to the Chair, Vice-Chair, Cllr Walden, and Clerk, with updates provided to the parish council as needed.

Paper by:

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