

25 MAR 2010

WEST BERKSHIRE COUNCIL

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25 MAR 2010

21<sup>st</sup> March 2010

POLICY AND COMMUNICATION

Dear Mr Chard,

**Re: Health partnership working – recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC)**

Thank you for your letter of 15<sup>th</sup> March requesting a formal response to the recommendations approved by the West Berkshire OSMC at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2010.

I have given careful consideration to the report of the meeting, and the contributions provided by Bev Searle, Director of Partnerships and Joint Commissioning, which have informed my response as follows:

- (1) The Council's Corporate Director (Community Services) and the NHS Berkshire West's Director of Partnerships and Joint Commissioning should agree that decisions having significant budget ramifications on other organisations should not be enacted until the financial year following that in which the decision was taken. The in-year cost of the decision should be managed and borne by the organisation with the original budget allocation.

The rationale for this recommendation is well understood, and I appreciate the positive motivation which has informed it. The PCT has sought to minimise the in-year financial impact of the Continuing Healthcare Reviews which were discussed at some length at the OSMC, through negotiation at both Director and Chief Executive level. It would be my preference to continue to

work on a case by case basis, seeking always to achieve a mutually agreeable way forward, rather than making a formal agreement which may bind both our organisations to work in a way which we may find less helpful in future:

- It would remove the ability of organisations to negotiate on specific circumstances.
- It would set a precedent that would need to be followed in all of our partnerships, which is unlikely to be achievable.
- There is a difficulty in defining what “significant” financial impact may mean. For example, there may be a cumulative effect in a number of areas, which may not be individually assessed as significant.

As was discussed at the OSMC, we have a number of well established partnership meetings, and jointly managed teams, which allow opportunities for issues to be raised at a number of levels. If it is not possible for issues to be resolved, they can (and have been) effectively escalated to Director or Chief Executive level for resolution. The Council and the PCT rely on each other to ensure provision of quality services for the people of West Berkshire, as well as effective management of resources, and we remain committed to the continued development of our partnership working in an increasingly challenging financial environment.

- (2) The Council’s Corporate Director (Community Services) and the NHS Berkshire West’s Director of Partnerships and Joint Commissioning should establish a protocol to ensure joint commitment and responsibility between organisations on the Joint Strategic Commissioning Partnership to the provision of greater notice of impending reviews. This should be at directorial level, regardless of the financial impact.

This recommendation will be taken forward by Bev Searle, Director of Partnerships and Joint Commissioning, subject to the agreement of the Council’s Corporate Director (Community Services).

- (3) The Council’s Corporate Director (Community Services) and the NHS Berkshire West’s Director of Partnerships and Joint Commissioning should provide a personal commitment for the resolution of issues through channels more informal than established partnerships, where appropriate.

I would support this recommendation – and would take the view that this commitment is already in existence, although it may be

supported effectively by the protocol referred to in recommendation 2. This will help to ensure that partnership arrangements are not overly dependent on personal relationships, although these are recognised as important.

I hope that this is helpful, and please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to follow up on any of my responses to the OSMC recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles Waddicor', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles Waddicor

Chief Executive, NHS Berkshire West.