

Vale Vision Business Forum
Thursday 9 July 2009 - Kingshill House, Dursley
www.valebusinessforum.org.uk

Guest Speakers: Jill Kearsley, Gloucestershire NHS Primary Care Trust
Dr Martin Freeman, Orchard Medical Centre, representing
the nine medical practices in the Berkeley Vale

Vale Business Forum Chairman Shirley Hill welcomed guests and opened the meeting with a reminder of the value of the Forum and the benefits of membership that include a web-site entry with the annual membership fee.

Next Forum Meeting: Wednesday 5 August at 7.30pm at the Severn Vale Brewing Company, Cam, followed by a buffet supper at The Old Spot Inn.

Next Business Breakfast: Thursday 20 August at 7.15 for 7.30am at Stinchcombe Hill Golf Club with guest David Drew, Stroud District MP.

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Councillor Dennis Andrewartha gave a very brief update on certain local issues, saying that the new fire station and the new school are recognised as being of exceptional quality. He referred to delays at the Littlecombe development which had meant that the traffic lights were delayed, with other knock-on effects. Sainsbury's is now progressing well, as are efforts to improve the sports facilities in the Sports Field. The rubber crumb all-weather surface is ideal for certain sports but not for others including the women's hockey team who now have to travel further afield. Cam has put in a bid to Sport England for support for the Jubilee Field, which is in trust for play.

Plans for a New Health Care Facility for the Severn Vale

Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust representative Jill Kearsley gave a presentation on the background to the plans for a new regional hospital. The facility is budgeted at £9-10 million, entirely from public funds, which will be assisted by moving some services from the other major hospitals. It was emphasised that no other services or facilities will be closed until the new hospital is operational.

Consideration had been given to the health profile of the area's population, with services to suit the expanding older proportion and the need to keep up to date with health care requirements to provide a range of services out into the community, to control infection, provide space for wheelchairs, provide hard standing for diagnostic mobile units and provide care nearer to people's homes.

Many local sectors had been involved and had provided input over a long period. Site option appraisals considered various Department of Health criteria plus access, links, public transport, proximity to other services, environmental issues, flooding, noise, and the likelihood of achieving planning permission. As a result three areas have been identified as possible sites for the new facility: Norman Hill, Draycott and Littlecombe.

Each site was said to be similar in size but with very different advantages and disadvantages. It is hoped that a decision on the site will be taken in the next four weeks, with submission of the full business case in January 2010 and opening in February 2012. It was noted that a degree of urgency is required because of the possibility of a new government implementing changed public sector spending priorities. It is therefore necessary to make significant progress before the end of the current financial year in order to secure the funding.

Draft building plans had been drawn up in order to facilitate the discussions, and have been checked on all three sites. To be cost effective to the PCT the architects were briefed to produce the plans in tandem with the new hospital proposed for Morton-in-the-Marsh. Refinements to suit each site and the requirements of each hospital were being incorporated with the assistance of staff and others, to ensure effective working together of multi-disciplinary teams. The plans showed a two story building with three wings and a spacious centre, enabling good light and access, together with parking of possibly sixty spaces for patients, staff and visitors.

Dr Martin Freeman of the Orchard Medical Centre, Cam, spoke enthusiastically about his support for the new hospital. He advised that the seven major practices in Berkeley Vale are fully committed and working together in support of the project. He emphasised that he was a long term supporter of Berkeley Hospital, having participated in protests at its possible closure in the past. However, as a clinician he fully appreciated that it does not have the capacity to move forward and fulfil future demands.

An issue of concern is that some 80% of local people currently have to travel out of the immediate locality for health care. The intention is to bring this down to 30% by reducing the need to transfer patients to Cheltenham and Gloucester. The facilities provided currently at Sandpits would be incorporated into the new hospital. Berkeley Hospital may become a sheltered care complex and/or a wellbeing clinic.

The new hospital plan provides twenty single in-patient en-suite rooms and nine consulting rooms, together with other facilities for children, for rehabilitation, dentistry etc. Chemotherapy and MRI scans would be provided by mobile services. Consultants would be on site either permanently or on demand. The in-patient rooms would be for patients with non-acute issues, not respite or intermediate care. Beds for nursing care and rehabilitation was a connected issue but being considered separately with nursing homes, particularly bearing mind the local demographic.

Traffic movements were of concern with Dursley's roads being already strained. Norman Hill was said to have the benefit of being adjacent to Social Services, more centrally located and the Sandpits area could increase the parking facility. It is also perceived as being more accessible for Wotton under Edge and Berkeley. However, it is in the sports field on a green field site. Draycott is seen as a pleasant site but it is adjacent to a number of production facilities that have sound ramifications. Commitment from more businesses is required before the developer will build the significant bridge that is necessary. Littlecombe has other issues not defined.

In discussion, everyone appeared to agree that progress is necessary and the community wants to understand the siting issues. Concerns were expressed that the design was land hungry and whether sufficient consideration had been given to future expansion. The speakers emphasised the significance of providing a much broader range of services locally. A hospital is key but is only a part of the whole care system, which needs to be flexible. Capacity planning is a massive complex issue, with a significant example being the requirement for a strategy for increased longevity and dementia, which affects 69% of the over 75s. The speakers are convinced this is the way forward and an outstanding opportunity for the future of the area, which needs to progress with a minimum of delay.

Jill Kearsley agreed to come back to speak again to Vale Business Forum in 2 - 3 months when they would hope to confirm the site and updated plans.
