



Wiltshire Council Health Select Committee Meeting

14 March 2013

Title:	Headquarters update
Prepared by:	John Oliver, External Communications Manager
Presented by:	TBC
Main aim:	To update Wiltshire Health Select Committee members on staffing plans in the former GWAS HQ
Recommendations:	To note the contents of the report
Previous Forum:	Joint HOSC, February 2013

Headquarters update

1. Background

- 1.1 In October 2011, Great Western Ambulance Service announced it had identified South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (SWASFT) as its preferred partner following its decision not to seek to become a foundation trust in its own right. Throughout the following 15 months of integration planning and engagement, it was clearly communicated – internally and externally – that the headquarters of the enlarged trust would be the existing SWASFT premises in Exeter.
- 1.2 Part of that internal engagement included inviting all staff at GWAS HQ premises (Jenner House as well as other facilities in Chippenham) to indicate where and how far they would be willing/able to travel to fulfil their role in the new organisation.
- 1.3 There was also a clear indication throughout the engagement process that one of the benefits of creating a single ambulance service serving the whole south-west of England would be the opportunity to reduce support/administration costs – including a reduction in support staff. This was accompanied by a commitment to maintain front-line operational cover.



2. Overview

- 2.1 SWASFT's acquisition of GWAS was completed on 1 February 2013 – at which point GWAS ceased to exist and all staff automatically transferred to SWASFT on their existing terms and conditions. In the weeks leading up to the acquisition date, staff in both organisations were consulted on draft departmental structures. The proposals included indications as to where particular roles would be based – for support roles, these were predominantly either at the Exeter HQ or at a regional administrative hub. In the case of the former GWAS area (now known as the SWASFT North Division), this is in a location still to be identified, but likely to be near the trust's existing clinical hub (control room) to the north of Bristol.
- 2.2 Following the creation of the enlarged organisation, further consultation began with all members of staff affected by the new organisational structures. One-to-one conversations with individuals identified:
- if they had been 'slotted in' to a post identical or similar to their current role;
 - were suitable to be considered for a role for which there is at least one other suitable individual (and therefore the role would be filled following a competitive interview process);
 - as being formally 'at risk' if no suitable role was identified.
- 2.3 Formal consultation with all affected staff is continuing – including the approximately 50 HQ support staff in the former GWAS area. For those staff identified as being 'at risk', the process includes working with them to identify suitable alternative roles within the trust and providing them with advance notice/access to suitable roles with other NHS organisations.
- 2.4 Given the continuing consultation process, it is not possible at this stage to put a figure on the number of staff likely to take redundancy. However, there has been a commitment throughout the pre- and post-acquisition process to ensure redundancies are kept to a minimum. Part of that has included not replacing staff who left either trust during the integration planning, thereby maximising vacancies for remaining staff following completion of the acquisition.
- 2.4 It is anticipated that the new trust structures will begin in July 2013. However, it is important to note that the lease on the main GWAS HQ building (Jenner House in Chippenham) expires in December 2013. Therefore, it is likely that GWAS would have vacated the building even if it had remained a stand-alone organisation.
- 2.4 The Committee may also be interested to learn that the closure of the Wiltshire dispatch centre went ahead on schedule last week – from 07:00hrs on Tuesday 5 March, dispatching of vehicles to patients in Wiltshire was switched to the trust's facility to the north of Bristol (an accredited international centre of excellence). The smooth transfer was thanks to staff in our clinical hubs (control rooms) and IT team working extremely hard in the weeks and months leading up to the transfer to



ensure that there was no loss of service to patients. Approximately half of affected staff in Devizes chose to relocate to our facility to the north of Bristol, ensuring trained, skilled and knowledgeable staff continue to dispatch responses to 999 clinical emergencies to patients in Wiltshire. The trust continued to support those other staff who took the decision not to transfer – including several towards the end of their working career choosing to retire.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 The Committee is invited to note the contents of the report

John Oliver
External Communications Manager