

TITLE:	CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED MERGER OF COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON AND TEES AND NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE NHS TRUSTS
TO/ON:	EXECUTIVE – 7TH NOVEMBER, 2005
BY:	DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION
PORTFOLIO:	COUNCILLOR W. ARMSTRONG
STATUS:	REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks Executive's response to the proposed merger of the County Durham and Darlington and Tees and North East Yorkshire NHS Trusts.

2. BACKGROUND

The Council has recently been consulted on the proposed merger of the County Durham and Darlington and Tees and North East Yorkshire NHS Trusts. A copy of the consultation paper has been attached at Appendix 'A', which sets out the case for change put forward by the two trusts.

The key issues set out in the consultation document highlights that alone both trusts believe they would find it very difficult to:

- Develop the specialist services needed locally and highlighted in the review;
- Become successful Foundation Trusts;
- Maintain the high local and national profile of mental health, learning disability and addictive behaviour services.

With regard to the timescale for the consultation, views are sought by 14th November, following which the results will be reported to the County Durham and Tees Valley Strategic Health Authority in December, 2005. Dependent on the Health Authority's views and the subsequent view of the Secretary of State for Health, it is envisaged that the new trust would be created in April, 2006.

The issue of the merger has been considered by Health Scrutiny on a number of occasions with the Chief Executive of the County Durham and Darlington

Priority Services Trust attending on 18th July to give a presentation on the reasons for the proposed merger.

3. MATERIAL CONSIDERATION

As mentioned above, Health Scrutiny has been consulted extensively on the proposed merger receiving a presentation on 18th July, which was then followed by further consideration of the issue on 17th October.

Following the publication of the official consultation document detailed at Appendix 'A', the majority view of Health Scrutiny was to reject the change. This conclusion was reached on the basis that members felt:

- Derwentside would ultimately lose out as a result of the change and resources would be relocated to the south of the County or Teesside;
- Alternatives should have been explored more extensively including the potential of an amalgamation with Tyneside based services, which would be more local to the residents of Derwentside;
- There were insufficient answers as to the critical issue stated in the consultation paper as to where and on what scale local people are having to go out with the current trust area for services.

Despite the concerns of Health Scrutiny, there was a general view that the merger would go ahead. In this event, despite their opposition to the move, members were of the opinion that in order to give some assurances to the local residents there should be a "Derwentside" representative on the board of any new trust (whether from the PCT or the Council).

Since receipt of the consultation paper the Council has been copied into a letter from Kevan Jones MP expressing his opposition to the proposed merger. The reasons cited by Kevan Jones include:

- The new trust would cover too large a geographical area;
- The areas covered by the new trust might not receive equal shares of the available resources;
- The current arrangements are more than satisfactory and there is not a strong case for change.

RECOMMENDATION

Executive is requested to note the content of this report and to comment on the proposed merger of the County Durham and Darlington and Tees and North East Yorkshire NHS Trusts.