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Number

D 268

Title MINUTES OF MEETING 19/9/02 IN JUDGE ROOM

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Receivers instructions urgent action Yes No

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Indexed as indicated

No(s) of actions raised

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NO

Further action no(s)

Code A

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**MINUTES OF GOSPORT WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
MEETING
HELD ON 19TH SEPTEMBER 2002 AT 12NOON
IN THE DUKE ROOM**

Attendees:**Hampshire Constabulary**

Mr I Readhead, DCC
Mr C Smith, ACC'SO'
D/Chief Supt. S Watts
Supt. P Stickler
D/Chief Insp. R Duncan
Chief Insp. P Clark
D/Insp. N Niven
Mr K Briscoe, Media Services

Apologies:**Health Authority**

Mr A Osborne
Dr S Tanner
Mr G Cruddace, Chief Exec
Ms M Stratford, NHS Direct

Minutes:

Miss R Adams

1. OVERVIEW

The DCC explained that the meeting had been called, as it is critical to agree on the future strategic arrangements regarding the enquiry being held at the Gosport War Memorial Hospital. The temporary redeployment of 2 Senior Employees is going to become public knowledge and of media interest, along with a group of relatives who have been vocal regarding the details during the 4 years. Mr Cruddace had passed a package of papers to the DCC last night that have not been seen by the Police before and shed new light on the enquiry.

The DCC gave an overview of the activities and work that had been done over the last 4 years in relation to this. The attendees agreed that this was a fair overview including background information and assessment of the current status. It was mentioned that Professor Baker is going to conduct a purely statistical analysis of the mortality rates at Gosport.

2. NEXT STEPS FOR THE POLICE

D/Chief Supt. Watts outlined the next steps to be taken on this investigation in the light of the new information presented.:

- Examine the new paperwork
- Find out how this new documentation came into the possession of the Health Authority.

- Review the papers to see what they can tell us regarding witnesses and evidence
- Interview persons named in the new papers to ascertain any new information.
- Pass this new material and the accounts of any persons interviewed as a result to the experts who reviewed the four cases examined by C/Supt James and then onto the CPS along with their comments
- Review the all existing and new material and evidence to identify any additional viable lines of enquiry.
- Examine individual and corporate criminal liability.
- Examine any possible offences such as misfeasance in public office in respect of persons who it may be said should have surfaced this new material earlier.

D/Chief Supt. Watts stated that DCI R Duncan and DI N Niven will assemble a team to continue this enquiry, based at Hulse Rd, Southampton. It was commented that the CPS in London would need to be informed of this, DCS Watts would do this. Supt. Stickler mentioned that a HSE investigation might need to be carried out, including whether the Trust is liable. DCS Watts agreed that this would need to be considered during the investigation.

3. HEALTH AUTHORITY PERSPECTIVE

Mr G Cruddace explained the role of the Health Authority in that they performance manage the local NHS but that the Trusts and Primary Care Groups are separate entities. He stated that they have 2 issues being:

- How do we satisfy ourselves about the 2 redeployed individuals – disciplinary offences. How do we go about this and cover what time frame?
- In 1998 the Trust conducted a disciplinary investigation in the case regarding the dispensing of drugs. Should they commission an investigation to look at what has gone on?

Mr G Cruddace continued to say that they need to coordinate their enquiries with the Police to ensure there is no duplication of work etc. He stated that most of yesterday was spent dealing with the redeployment but had not looked too much at the issues regarding dealing with the media.

4. MEDIA

The DCC stated that the meeting needed to decide:

- who they are going to tell?
- what they are going to say?
- and what actions will follow in relation to this?

Dr S Tanner stated that the GMC have this new information and that the Nursing and Midwifery Council will receive it later today. He stated that with

the press release you need to bear in mind the interest of the public and the reputation of the NHS.

It was agreed that the relatives of the patients involved should be informed prior to informing the media.

CONTENTS OF PRESS RELEASE

It was suggested that the press release include:

- purely factual information (not to talk about specific cases and dates)
- that 2 senior employees (naming them) have been redeployed in light of new evidence in relation to this ongoing investigation

It was agreed that the emphasis needs to be on the Health Authority and make sure that people do not think it is purely a criminal case.

Mr G Cruddace said that this is more or less what they had included in a draft holding statement. Mr A Osborne read out the suggested statement.

There was discussion as to whether the 1991 date should be mentioned and it was agreed that the press release include:

- that the investigation dates back to 1991 (this date will otherwise leak out and reduce the Authority's credibility).

The DCC commented that the Chief Constable was keen for D/Chief. Supt Watts' name to be mentioned in the press release to show that the most senior detective in the Constabulary is heading the ongoing investigation. After discussion it was decided not to include his name as he would receive telephone calls and that the focus should be more towards the Health perspective.

It was agreed that with a few small adjustments the draft press release would be suitable.

PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC'S RESPONSE

It was mentioned that before releasing this information to the press a process needs to be in place to deal with the predicted public's response to it.

Mr Cruddace outlined how they would normally deal with this as an NHS Enquiry:

- include a free phone number in the press release for concerned people to call
- the phone number to be manned by people who deal with the feasibility of the call and channel to the experts as necessary.

It was agreed that this needs to be based as a purely health issue call and once information has been filtered, only pass details onto the police if possible crimes are mentioned.

It was decided that a help line number to the NHS should be shaped into the press release. Ms Stratford will arrange the help line.