

Healthwatch Hertfordshire Board Meeting
10am on Tuesday 22nd February 2022,
Virtually via Zoom

Please note: It will be assumed that reports will have been read prior to the meeting

Board Members: Eve Atkins, Alan Bellinger, Meg Carter, Brenda Davies, Brian Gunson, Sundera Kumara-Moorthy, Steve Palmer (Chair), Jan Taylor, Jayne Taylor, Michael Taylor, Neil Tester
Executive Team: Geoff Brown (Chief Executive), Nuray Ercan (Head of Governance and Operations), Priya Vaithilingam (Head of Research and Engagement)
Visitors/others: none
Apologies: Alex Booth, Joy Hale (ENH CCG), Stephanie Smith (ENH CCG)

1. Welcome, apologies and register of interests

Steve welcomed everyone present. Nuray communicated apologies, as above.

Steve reminded everyone that it is important to declare any personal and/or professional interests.

2. Minutes of 23rd November 2021 and outstanding actions

The minutes were approved as an accurate record. The outstanding actions tracker was reviewed.

3. Chair's update

Steve's gave his Chair's report on the following items:

- Board Away Day - The governance training last week provided lots of food for thought. Steve suggested formalising the Chair's update, perhaps by providing a written report. Steve encouraged everyone to submit their workshop choices by the end of the week. Another area that we may wish to look into is becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.
- Covid - The government made a further announcement yesterday. Long Covid has been a discussion point at recent holding to account meetings - this will need to be kept on the agenda.
- AGM - Is pencilled in for July and Steve recommended that it take place in person this year. He asked for Board's thoughts and Board were generally positive.
- This Board meeting will be the last that Michael, Kumar, Meg and Brian will attend as they will be standing down at the end of March. They will be thanked formally at the AGM.
- Kumar's departure means that the Vice-chair role will need to be filled. Steve asked for 200 word statement, to be sent to Geoff and Nuray, from Board members who wish to put themselves forward.

Action: To elect a new Vice-chair

- IP Scrutiny - Steve, Brenda and Meg represented on Public Health, Children & Families and Adult Social Care portfolios respectively. Steve has fed back that he suggests that HwH provides a written submission going forward. All participants agreed that it would be good to take stock on our involvement going forward.
- Holding to account - We met with the CCGs last week - we need to keep an eye on GP services as it changes. Board discussed GP access issues and Geoff highlighted:
 - The Community Assembly heard from a Primary Care Director about the challenges that they're dealing with, taking on new roles and opportunities. Geoff suggested having this person come to a future Board meeting to provide a talk on this area.
 - Alongside HwEssex we are being commissioned to do work on primary care to ensure that the patient voice is heard on areas of concerns.
 - Money has been invested in telephony within GP practices.
 - The impact of having a national contract is limiting on what changes can happen locally.
- The elective recovery plan - we will ensure that commissioners/providers know what role we can play in helping how they might engage and communicate with their patients, as well as linking in with HwE.

- System pressures and mental health - The Niche report has been published and the figures that they anticipated needing mental health support within 3 years have been exceeded in less than a year. Steve stressed that we should ensure that any work we do on this has impact. We will ensure that we continue to follow up with HPFT regarding the questions we have asked them.
- We are discussing our inequalities work at meetings so that it can make a difference and data used at the various Trusts. The recent covid government announcement may exasperbate inequalities with the end to free testing, changes to sick pay, self-isolation etc - it would be good to raise at holding to account meetings and get a commitment from partners to keep us updated about their covid/vaccination plans and their approach to to dealing with the new national approach to surveillance.
- There has been a three month delay in the ICS being set up. The current date is July 2022. Steve attends the transition Board. As the ICS covers Herts and West Essex there will need to be a protocol drawn which will be discussed at the next Board.

4. Chief Executives update

- **Voice Contract including monitoring return and compliments**

Geoff updated that there is a huge amount of work that has been done and the quality has remained high despite the challenges of volume and pressures. Nearly all performance indicators are green and the projects and activity document provides further detail.

We have had a meeting with commissioners to see what their expectations are of the contract from 2023 onwards. They are happy with our performance and have gone away to think about measures within a new contract which aligns/reflects our activity. Geoff confirmed that our commissioners would provide a broad steer and we would be enabled to also input. Our commissioners have liaised with HwE in the past.

There is lots of work going on around equality and diversity and in addition we are attending, and being asked to be part of lots of groups at all levels. This will be a continued focus over the next year.

It is the time of year where we are starting to look to our focus on our activity for the next year and beyond. Having impact should be our focus here. In response to a query, Geoff explained that Board would usually be provided with an overview of performance at away days but we need to sharpen it up by not only providing activity and outcomes but also reflect resource and prioritisation.

Board congratulated the team on achievements and delivery.

5. Office relocation update

Nuray updated Board against the plans under the five key areas concerned presented at the August Board meeting and asked if there were any questions.

Nuray confirmed that there would be a process to book the office and that she would track utility over the course of the year to feed into office requirements in future.

6. Policy sign off

Various policies have been reviewed over the past couple of months. A few have been signed off with minimal changes by the Company Secretary and will be circulated outside of the meeting.

The Volunteering Policy, Confidentiality Policy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy have had more substantial changes made to them, either due to changes in legislation or operational changes and these are highlighted in yellow. [Board signed the three policies off.](#)

7. Report Sign Off - none at this time

8. Finance

Alan gave an overview of the management accounts. They reflect the accounts up to the end of December 2021. We have a negative variance on staff costs and a saving on non-staff costs. The deficit before additional revenue is 7.4k. We have generated 18k in income from projects. Currently there is a positive variance of 25k. The reserves are currently approximately 300k.

The draft 2022-23 budget was presented for Boards consideration. The Board discussed the budget lines and income geration target. [The Board approved this budget.](#)

9. Board Advisory Committee

Alan updated that the committee discussed holding to account themes as well as having a good discussion focussing on principles for the budget and models/the direction of travel for the organisation from 2023 onwards.

10. Any other business including questions from the public - none

Next formal meeting of the Board: Tuesday 24th May 2022, 10am - 1pm

DRAFT