

Chief Executive's update

FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION

1. Overview of this paper

In recognition of a busy agenda ahead, this section will tackle three separate elements:

- A. Chief Executive's update – business planning for FY 26/27, Internal and external developments
- B. 6-month Services Update – to note
- C. Contract Monitoring – to note

A. Chief Executive's update

Business planning and research program development

Given next year will require a concurrent consideration of our business-as-usual activities, and a focus on what might be a new way of thinking and working beyond legislative change, the program must be devised with sufficient flexibility to achieve both, and the timeline on the latter will be the subject of our away day in December.

Otherwise, it is recommended that we broadly stick to our usual planning timeline:

- *December and January 2025* – conversations with the staff team, board, voluntary sector partners, the public, key system decision makers and stakeholders to inform key projects for the year ahead and broad themes for our research. Some of these have already begun through meetings with stakeholders and internally, with the research team.
- *End of January 2025* – early proposals explored at Business Advisory Committee
- *March 2025* – sign off final plans at Board meeting in public

Internal developments

Since Board's endorsement to move forward with recruiting to capacity gaps created by staff departures, I have had preliminary discussions with two charity interim placement agencies, our HR advisor, our account manager at Charity Jobs as well as a well-established Hertfordshire based recruitment agency, with the intention of learning about the best way to recruit to the highly specialised and experienced roles we are looking to fill, with our dynamic environment and additional support I need as the CEO, to make sure the people who join us meaningfully help us navigate what's ahead and to limit change and disruption.

In addition, also with Board's endorsement of approach, I am starting conversations with existing staff team about the opportunities current capacity gaps might create for some enhanced responsibilities and professional development. These conversations will culminate by the end of this month, and it is my hope that we will have a clearer and more stable staffing picture at this stage – with some interim placements.

Once we have more certainty about the budget envelope from Hertfordshire County Council, this will substantially help with the sense of dynamic uncertainty that has exacerbated staff concerns around clarity of timelines and decision making, as well as the impacted on the departure of team members. The circumstances of the legislative change have created stress for us, and for many of our friends at other Healthwatch, and it remains of the utmost importance that we continue to put the staff team's wellbeing and resilience at the top of the list while this protracted period of uncertainty looms ahead.

On a very personal note, the team will be feeling sharply the departure of Nuray Ercan, a stalwart champion of our values, our governance and compliance guru, and a really valued and loved member of the team. I want to wish Nuray the best for the future, and I look forward to celebrating all that she has contributed to Healthwatch when we reunite with her and other colleagues we've sent off onto new adventures, at our Christmas gathering in December.

External developments

As has been previously agreed at the meetings of trustees, it has become clear that a timeline should accompany all our conversations so that we keep abreast of key developments at a strategic level, and make sure our thinking aligns with new information as it arises. As can be seen in the appendix following this paper, the timeline is currently missing much detail – but it is there so that we can continue to review and populate. As mentioned in the Chair's paper, I have been meeting with the Healthwatch CEOs whose organisations will be part of the bigger Central East Integrated Care Board – or CE ICB. This sees West Essex as moving away, and a new structure to include Cambridge and Peterborough, Milton Keynes, Bedfordshire, Luton and Hertfordshire – arguably the biggest ICB in the country. As CEOs we've been discussing how to articulate a united offer for the new ICB, and if there were opportunities to pilot test working together to deliver services on a bigger footprint.

B. 6- month Services Update

Echoing the Chair's comments in the paper preceding this, the staff team's commitment to our work program and the quality of the work they're producing, given the circumstances, must be recognised as nothing short of phenomenal. The services update contains a detailed look of our commitment to our communities, championing the inclusion of their experiences and voices in decision-making. To bolster our insights from our signposting information, advice and guidance service (Section 1 of the paper), we use our proactive research program (Section 2 of the paper) to ensure voices that are less likely to be heard and sought out are proactively engaged with. The breadth of subjects

and engagements over this year has been substantive, and as we approach the final quarter of our annual business plan and research program, we can see the evidence of a team that has kept their commitment to our values and importance of our work in Hertfordshire.

C. Contract Monitoring information for Quarter 2 – July to September 2025

The final paper in this section will be the familiar reporting of our contract monitoring information. We submit these documents to our commissioners at Hertfordshire County Council [HCC] on a quarterly basis, as an illustration of our successful meeting (and frequently exceeding) of our agreed KPIs in our contract.

The document pack contains:

- Our performance indicators containing measures and targets for good governance and values & behaviours – these are RAG (red, amber, green) rated to monitor progress
- A project activity document, outlining the details behind all the key functions we hold, from research and engagement, comms, quality monitoring and holding to account conversations with senior most decision-makers in our county.
- A compliments list, which tracks feedback from those who work with us, and is only a small snapshot of the positive support and influence we have in the local system.

A further section of our typical reporting to HCC is provided in our private meeting because of potentially identifiable information; it contains demographic information on our signposting, research, case studies and staffing. This information allows us to monitor the reach of our work across different communities, with a strong focus on health inequalities.

Thank you

As has become custom in my papers, a big thank you is needed to recognise the commitment and support Healthwatch Hertfordshire trustees have given the staff team and I, since I began my role 14 months ago and in particular over the last few months, as we start to navigate significant external change locally, nationally, and within. As trustees, your energy and support have been instrumental in us being able to make a difference to the communities in Hertfordshire, and I know you are as committed as the staff team are in continuing to do so.

Working timeline of key strategic considerations

		Internal Considerations	External Considerations	
			Commissioning	Legislative
2025				
October	Delivery of FY 25/26 work plan			
November		HCC receive funding from LRCV grant		
December				
2026				
January	Delivery of FY 25/26 work plan	HCC business planning assumptions clarifies our budget position		
February	- Delivery of FY 25/26 work plan - Finalise FY 26/27 Work plan and budget	HCC ACS Exec director in Post		
March	- Delivery of FY 25/26 work plan - Board sign off FY 26/27 Work plan and budget			
April	Start of Financial year 2026/2027		Various stages of bill and legislative debate and approval	
May	Delivery of FY 26/27 work plan			
June				
July				
August				
September	Delivery of FY 26/27 work plan			
October			TBC unknown: Clarity of change to statutory functions	
November				
December				
2027				
January	- Delivery of FY 26/27 work plan - Transition			
February				
March			Statutory duties transferred or transition in play	
April				