

MINUTES
of a meeting of the Governance Board
26 November 2024
(13:30-16:00)
At Queen's Court

Present:

Anne-Marie Dean, Chairman
Ian Buckmaster, Company Secretary
Ron Wright, Non-Executive Director

Carole Howard, Office Administrator
Jenny Douglass, Community Support Assistant

Carol Dennis, Di Old and Val Perry Members

1 Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received for the absence of Jenny Gregory and Dawn Ladbrook

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations.

3 Minutes of meeting held 15 October 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2024 were agreed as a correct record and the Chairman was authorised to sign them.

There were no matters arising.

4 Finance Report

(a) Finance Report for October

The report for October was submitted.

Expenditure for the month had been £12,364, which was broadly in line with recent monthly outgoings. Expenditure included £714 to buy the office photocopier as authorised at the last meeting.

The bank balances at the end of the month were noted.

There was nothing to which attention needed to be drawn.

(b) Employers' National Insurance Contributions

It was noted that all employers were required to pay National Insurance Contributions (NICs), currently at a rate of 13.8% on earnings above a threshold of £9,500 pa. In the budget in October, however, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had raised Employers' NICs from next April by a considerable margin: the rate was increased to 15% and the threshold was lowered to £5,000 pa. The combined effect, for all employers, would be to significantly increase the cost of NICs: a rough calculation suggested the company's Employer NICs would rise from about £6,920 this year to around £9,980, an increase of some £3,060 (nearly 45%).

Small companies could, however, claim an Employment Allowance (EA) under which contributions of £5,000 were rebated: if the EA were applied to the company this year, NICs would drop to £1,920; as EA would rise next April to £10,500, no Employer NICs would be payable at all.

Although previous advice had been that the company did not qualify for EA because HMRC guidance suggested that the funding arrangements made it ineligible, a review of whether Healthwatch activities were "of a public nature" had led to an application being made to HMRC that, if granted, would apply EA not only to the current year but retrospectively to the past four financial years. Board will be kept informed of the progress of this application.

5 Havering Place-based Partnership (HPbP)

The Chairman reported that the HPbP Board had recently approved the Havering Physical Capacity Plan for 2024/25, through which some £1.38 million would be available for three priorities:

- Keeping people well in their homes
- Providing urgent care when needed
- Supporting people to return home

A variety of relatively small schemes had been approved, to be delivered by or on behalf of Havering Council, NELFT and Havering Health (through GP practices).

The schemes did not include provision for supporting homeless people as that came from different funding sources.

It was noted that NHSNEL had recently approved similar schemes for Redbridge.

6 NHS North East London/North East London Health and Care Partnership

The Board were advised that the current deficit for NHSNEL was of the order of £63 million, which was likely to increase by the end of the financial year. Among a range of cost pressures was the high level of attendances at A&E services.

7 Safeguarding and Quality - update

Ms Old advised that there had been little change in the general position that safeguarding remained a concern at many care homes and there had been very few reports on health and social care facilities in Havering by the CQC in recent months.

It was agreed that a meeting should be sought with the local CQC team to discuss these concerns in the New Year.

8 Engagement projects - update

- **Long COVID**

A meeting would shortly be held to discuss setting up Peer Support Groups. NELFT had recently arranged a “Long COVID Café” for people living with Long COVID.

A further report would be submitted at the next meeting.

- **Creative Health Havering**

- Healthwatch Essex had been unable to arrange the exhibition they had proposed for the Christmas period. A further meeting would take place with them in the New Year to discuss other opportunities, including the possibility of arranging for it in the St George’s Centre.

- **Enter & View visits**

- The report of the E&V visit to the ELIFAR facilities (formerly Lilliputs) in Wingletye Lane had now been published. A visit to The Paddocks was being arranged for the New Year.

The latest E&V visits to A&E had now been completed. The recent visit to the LAS area had not gone well as no one from the LAS had been present at the time when the team arrived for the visit; it was not clear why. It was agreed that this should be taken up with LAS management.

Otherwise, the visits to PELC and the ED had gone well. The report was now being drafted.

The initial visit to the new St George's Centre would be taking place on 4 December, with a formal E&V visit to take place once it had been open for a couple of months.

- **Patient Participation Groups (PPG)**
 - It had become apparent that the re-establishment of PPGs is no longer as high a priority for NHSNEL as was previously the case. This would be revisited later in 2025.
- **Mystery Shopping – provision of Hearing Loop systems at health facilities**
 - Both the Polyclinic and Queen's Hospital visits had taken place at the end of October. The visits went well; hearing loops were observed in place and staff knew how to use them.
- **NSPCC Pants Campaign**
 - It had not proved possible to arrange the focus groups we had intended to so, instead, an online survey had been launched widely. The findings will be reported in due course.
- **Defibrillators in Havering**
 - A new member (with specialist knowledge) had agreed to pursue this project and progress would be reported in due course.

9 St George's Centre - progress

The Centre was now open and the Project Management Board had now been wound up and would be replaced by a Partnership Board on which Healthwatch had a seat. Some issues remained outstanding but the GP practice was now in place and the Dialysis Unit would shortly begin operation.

The proximity of the Centre to the former RAF Hornchurch meant that links were being forged with military veterans' organisations, especially those related to the RAF and the airfield (see also minute 11 following).

10 "Fixing the NHS"

The Government had launched a consultation exercise on the future of the NHS, prior to developing a 10 Year Health Plan for England, to which "everyone" had been invited to contribute.

It was noted that the consultation was due to end shortly and the Board considered that there was insufficient opportunity for a meaningful contribution to be made to it.

11 Veteran Friendly Framework programme

The Board was advised that the Royal Star & Garter organisation, the Royal British Legion and the NHS were collaborating to ensure that every veteran in the UK who lived in a residential care setting received more tailored support. Havering had the third highest number of resident veterans in London and both the North East London Health & Social Care Partnership had committed to the Armed Forces Covenant, and Havering Council were expecting to follow. Some 80% of local GP practices had signed up to be “veteran friendly” so far.

Ex-service women were particularly in need of support.

The Board agreed to support the initiative and that future E&V visits to residential care and nursing homes for the elderly should include questions relating to their care for veterans in residence.

12 Next meeting

The next meeting would be on 21 January 2025, at the office.

_____ Chairman