

Minutes of the Board Meeting

Date / Time: 16th September 2020, 11.00am

Venue: Virtual meeting via Zoom

Present: Chair: Val Moore. Directors: Jonathan Wells, Saqib Rehman, Nadia Emmony, Nick Patten and Margaret Robinson Guarantors: Clive Morton and Victor Lucas and CEO: Sandie Smith

Minute taker: Carole Russell

Introduction and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to our Board Meeting held in public via zoom. Apologies received from: Susan Mahmood, (Paul Jobling had intermittent connectivity issues)

Declarations of interest

2. There were none declared relating to the agenda.

Minutes of the previous meeting

3. The minutes of meeting on 15th July 2020 were approved.

Action log

4. All actions completed or in progress except two which remain on hold while we clarify the local authority position on consultations paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
5. The Board asked us to get advice from the Sensory Impairment Partnership Board to improve our access to meetings.
6. VL commented on the mixed response to local Trusts meeting in public.

Action: Directors to report back if they have attended Trust or Board meetings.

Action: CR to maintain action log to last 2 Board meetings plus outstanding actions.

Investors in Volunteers (IiV)

7. VM congratulated the team on the achievement of being awarded the Investors in Volunteering within the lockdown period, even more of a success story as we were one of the first to be assessed virtually.
8. CTJ gave an overview of the report and the valuable work of the volunteers at Healthwatch. She explained that we can now start using the logo on our literature. We have also been recognised by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) who have singled us out for a case study.
9. CTJ thanked Heather and all the volunteers for their involvement in the IiV process and ongoing work. Healthwatch staff are keeping in touch with all the volunteers through this difficult time.

10. The report makes some suggestions, and we will be working towards incorporating these in the following months.
11. Heather updated the Board we are continuing to work on our diversity and our impact, we will also be trying to utilise more of our volunteer's skillsets in reaching the objectives of Healthwatch.
12. A guest volunteer attended the Board meeting and updated about the work they are doing online and surveys they are involved in, making blogs and films as well.
13. MR commented that the volunteers and the structure around them makes them all feel like a complete part of the Healthwatch team.
14. JW asked if Heather had found the process to be very rigorous and difficult or if it had been an easy process. There were 9 indicators and 46 practice points to prove and provide evidence for, but easy to follow even though quite rigorous.
15. VL asked if there was any feedback from the work that staff and volunteers had been doing in the community through the early stages of lockdown. SS responded that we have taken part in a County Council review process to plan should there be a 2nd wave, and those that were able to be involved in the community work have found it very rewarding. VM updated the Board that several of our staff have received letters of thanks and recognition from the Lord Lieutenant on behalf of the Queen for their volunteering contribution throughout the pandemic.

Chair's report

16. VM introduced her report which sets out the public activities carried out by the Chair since the last Board meeting.
17. She thanked the Directors who have a key role in running the forums and other meetings and link with Trusts and partners at this time.
18. VM introduced the topic of restarting the NHS services locally, touching on increased waiting times and longer times for services such as diabetes clinics and diagnostic testing.
19. VM explained how the STP (local NHS and social care partnership) is planning to get services up and running, while preparing for a possible second wave of coronavirus and expected winter health challenges. While there are challenges ahead, people are encouraged to come forward if they are ill or concerned about their health or care.
20. VM highlighted the findings of our COVID-19 survey, which has given us a strong evidence base for involving local people in the reset of services following the unprecedented disruption.
21. The chair updated the Board on measures in place at our offices for the safety of Staff and Volunteers. These are all in line with advice from Healthwatch England.

The Board noted the Chair's report.

Chief Executive's report

22. SS highlighted the achievements of the last 2 months. A key piece of work has been the GP website audit project undertaken by staff and volunteers as websites are increasingly important in the digital age but even more so as the 'front door' to GPs.

We liaised with the Local Medical Committee (LMC) and the CCG before starting this work. Healthwatch is offering the practices feedback on the opportunity they have for improvement.

23. We have published three Covid-19 survey briefings from over 1,000 responses and we are now working on the final report which is due in October.
24. We have a process for staff to follow for small face to face engagement opportunities including a risk assessment. To be approved by CR and SS before going ahead. Our core engagement work remains online.
25. The ongoing work towards our strategic priorities has been included in a table within the CEO report. The engagement activity is now mainly through the Health and Care Forums and Partnership Boards which all meet online. SS is pleased to update the Board on the increasing numbers attending these meetings excluding our Directors, staff or volunteers.
26. SS gave an update on the current escalations including concerns regarding flu vaccinations, access to NHS dentists and concerns regarding the lack of Trust Board meetings in public.
27. The websites are receiving increased use with over 7,000 hits on testing for coronavirus and more than 2,000 video plays of the vlogs and blogs.
28. Our information and signposting service has been very busy with a large number of calls and online experiences coming in during August. Our impacts and influencing activity is included in the report. Access to NHS dentists remains a big problem across the area.
29. We assisted Healthwatch England with identifying participants for a research project 'the Doctor will Zoom you now' which gathered the experiences of using telephone and online consultations during the Covid-19 period. The research report has been shared with our providers who have found it very helpful; sharing widely with their staff.
30. The workplan has been updated to reflect our current work and the plan through to January 2021.
31. JW commented on the different ways we now engage with people and asked if we are finding this frustrating or positive. SS responded that she believes our future includes a blended approach by keeping some elements of the current online connectivity but to recommence face to face engagement with safety measures.
32. NE commented that it is very difficult to reach younger people but she sees the social media engagement to be very positive in this area.
33. VL wondered how we cope with the more worrying aspect of trolls etc. SS responded that we have a social media policy that sets out how we deal with this and ensure the true facts are reaching people.

Action: VM requested a year on year comparison for information and signposting.

The Board noted the Chief Executive's report.

Communications Report

34. VM introduced this item as an annual focus for the Board.
35. AR gave a full update on the work that the Comms team have delivered in the past 12 months also noting that after the first 6 months the communications switched focus during the pandemic to support our system, our people and our communities, particularly in the initial phases. The team continues to develop a positive relationship with local stakeholders, including media organisations, to increase the number of earned media opportunities we achieve, e.g. articles in local papers, on the radio and in voluntary and community sector partner publications, we had over 60 articles published in local newspapers.
36. AR reminded the Board of the campaigns and reports worked on. There has also been significant increase in digital comms as our two websites have now moved to a more accessible and engaging format - an increase of 105% on the Peterborough website traffic when compared to the previous year.
37. Social media engagement has also increased, we use Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, although Facebook is our main focus as it integrates with YouTube for vlogs and other videos - an increase of 288% in this year.
38. To assist people who are not online we developed hard copies of all reports and in Easy Read. The team has also developed a leaflet in 14 different community languages which tell people in their own languages who Healthwatch is, what we do and how we may be able to help.
39. MR acknowledged how complex the role is and how well messages are being promoted. JW remarked on the contrast between our own very strong comms and service providers who have been highlighted as being poor public communicators through the pandemic. SS responded that we do frequently get asked to promote or distribute messages from other organisations but there is a capacity issue to consider. SS also advised the Board that the local providers' messages are controlled by NHS England so there are some restrictions on them.
40. VM remarked she is particularly taken with the future of web conferencing and other methods to help us to engage with people.
41. A member of the public commented that she had found the blogs to be particularly powerful - the member of our staff who is a carer of her adult daughter with learning disabilities detailing the challenges that they face.
42. VM thanked AR and also to Kari Payne who has made a big contribution to this work.

The Board noted the Communications Report.

General Purposes Group (GPG) report including Finance

43. NP presented the report, confirming the financial position at the end of July.
44. The GPG has considered the budget and would like to recommend a 2% uplift for all staff to be backdated to April 2020. VM advised that the Board is aware of the process and principles of the consideration of the award and confirmed that they are happy to approve this recommendation with the backdate to April.

45. There has been a £5k underspend in July with our outgoings being affected by the pandemic with little spend on room hire or staff travel. The professional fees show an overspend due to an annual cost for service which has been paid in June.
46. The year to date, currently 4 months, shows an underspend of £22k. The forecast is likely to change but shows a healthy amount. The forecast currently assumes a position of back to 'normal' in September, however this is not likely to happen so the figures will change.
47. SS advised that we will be doing a budget review by the next GPG for the 6 month period and take forecast into consideration. MR acknowledged that the future spend is very uncertain and we need to be fluid and understanding in this.
48. VL commented that the County Council so far has been very prompt in their payments, but he sought assurance that this would continue given cutbacks. SS advised that we do have a three year grant arrangement with a contract in place to March 2022. If there was any change Healthwatch England have a robust system of support in place. We know that national government has advised local councils to continue their grant payments.
49. NP advised the Board that two policies had been reviewed in this period, the media policy and the social media policy, the GPG recommends these to the Board. JW commented that the titles may be confusing as very similar. SS advised that the social media policy replaces the online engagement policy, amended to encompass all online interaction. The media policy is new and covers 'earned media' which is what other people put out about us.
50. A member of the public commented that her six grandchildren all use Tik-Tok. AR commented that we constantly review the use of various media and TikTok is very new platform, but we will keep this in mind.

The Board noted the report and approved the two policies.

- Media Policy
- Social Media Policy

Risk register

51. SS advised that as a result of the two policies just discussed two new risks had been identified. Unfortunately, the correct version of the risk register was not available at the meeting.
52. VM asked that the Board look at the updated version at the next development meeting.

Action: SS to add the risk register to the October development meeting agenda.

Any other business

53. No public questions and no other points raised at this time

VM thanked all attendees. Meeting closed at 16:07