

## Chair's update

### FOR INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/DECISION

#### 1. Board developments

As I recently updated board members in more detail, our annual board 1:1s were very constructive and some consistent themes emerged to drive our planning and action. Overall, board members were positive about the way the board and our meetings and papers are continuing to develop. There's an appetite for us to carry on thinking about how we set priorities and spend most time on what's most important.

Lots of us had been thinking about the need to make sure that we could represent the organisation effectively, and what would help us to be good ambassadors. There were several conversations about our developing approach as part of a network of networks, enabling us to gather and share intelligence, raise awareness of our work and our services and increase the range of our routes to impact.

It was great to have the reflections of colleagues who joined us in the last recruitment round. One had used the 'buddy' scheme we set up last year and found it helpful. Those who've been on the board longer value the perspectives that newer trustees have brought, including the willingness to ask clarifying questions.

In November we agreed in principle to appoint a vice-chair and following the 1:1s Amanda Hutchinson kindly offered to serve in that role. Board members have agreed to elect her as Vice-Chair. I'm grateful to Amanda and looking forward to working with her.

I am pleased to say that we have had good interest in our current trustee recruitment process and I have spoken to a number of potential applicants. Applications have not yet closed at the time of writing but I will be able to update the board during our Part 2 session at the meeting. Thanks to all the staff who've worked to organise and promote this process, and to the board colleagues who've been able to commit time to take part in shortlisting and interviewing.

#### 2. Organisational developments

Much of our agenda at this meeting will focus on the plans that have been developed for 2025–26. I would like to thank everyone on the staff and board for the thought and intensive effort that has gone into our new approach, building on the momentum from our strategic board session in December. Given the external uncertainty described in the next section, I think we will look back and be glad that we have undertaken this rigorous process.

### **3. National and local system context**

Due to the need to ensure we don't inadvertently stray into issues that could be construed as affecting the forthcoming local elections, I will make this section briefer than the subject matter might otherwise warrant. However, the weeks leading up to this meeting have seen significant national decisions that will have substantial effects on the local environment in which we carry out our functions. NHS England's abolition has been announced, heralding legislation which could also encompass other changes over the next two years. Integrated Care Boards have been instructed to cut their management costs by half and to focus on strategic commissioning rather than system performance. A new chief executive and chair at the Care Quality Commission are beginning to refocus its activities. While Hertfordshire is not in the vanguard of councils implementing the national decision to move to unitary local authorities and strategic authorities with elected mayors, discussions about what future structures in the county might look like are already underway. Decision-makers in our acute sector providers continue to digest and act upon the implications of the substantially revised timetable for the New Hospitals Programme. Finally, by the time we meet it is possible that Dr Penny Dash will have published her review of patient safety organisations, which also encompasses Healthwatch England and local Healthwatch.

All of this means simultaneously that we will need to be more agile than ever in working with people and organisations in a state of flux and that people's need for us to be an effective channel for their voices will be even greater. I have confidence that the decisions the board will make at this meeting will put us in a strong position to do both.

### **4. 'Holding to account' and other meetings**

Since our last meeting I represented us at the Integrated Care Partnership Board and at two meetings of the Health and Wellbeing Board. As vice-chair of the latter I have been chairing a task and finish group setting the framework for a county-wide workshop on implementation of the Hertfordshire health and wellbeing strategy, which took place at the start of this month and developed recommendations for the Health and Wellbeing Board. Together with Ivana I have met senior leaders from all of our acute Trusts and the chair and chief executive of the Integrated Care Board. The Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny Committee's planned patient experience deep dive, considering general practice, was postponed from December to March and then postponed again, for a variety of reasons. I was very pleased to attend One Vision's faith and health networking meeting at the House of Commons.

**RECOMMENDATIONS – The Board is asked to:**

1. Note Amanda Hutchinson's election as Vice-Chair.
2. Note the report.