

**Healthwatch Hertfordshire Board Meeting**  
**10am on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024,**  
**Virtually via Zoom**

<b>Board Members:</b> Eve Atkins, Alan Bellinger, Ryan Heard, Amanda Hutchinson, Enoch Kanagaraj, Ramone Samuda, Jan Taylor, Neil Tester (Chair)
<b>Executive Team:</b> Geoff Brown (Chief Executive), Fiona Corcoran (Deputy Chief Executive), Nuray Ercan (Deputy Chief Executive, Governance and Operations), Alice Lovell (Office Manager), Natalie Stone (Finance and Resources Manager)
<b>Visitors/others:</b>
<b>Apologies:</b> Alex Booth, Susan Ebanyat (HCC Commissioner), Joy Hale, Sally Orr, Stephanie Smith (NHS Herts and West Essex ICB), Amy Willcox-Smith

### 1. Welcome, apologies and register of interests

Neil welcomed everyone present and communicated apologies, as above. All Trustees introduced themselves for the benefit of new Trustees.

Register of interests are correct as at the time of publication. We have now received interests from the remainder of the newly appointed Trustees and will be updated in time for the next meeting.

### 2. Minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and outstanding actions

The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed off.

Geoff and Neil updated Board on the status of items within the action tracker.

### 3. Chair's update

Neil referred to his report circulated as part of the meeting papers.

Neil updated Board on the financial situation of the local system and highlighted that we have had good meetings with leaders of the ICB and with the leadership of service provider organisations about the implications of this.

Board agreed and noted the following:

- changes to the membership of the board
- the intention to conduct board re-appointments at the annual general meeting
- to prepare the annual report by 30 June but to follow the national advice to publish it after the period of pre-election sensitivity.

Board was advised to refrain from publish anything on social media during Pre-Election Period (PERP) that could be misconstrued as a Healthwatch view.

### 4. Chief Executive's update including: Organisational performance and contract monitoring

We have circulated the contract monitoring documents for quarter 4, as usual. Geoff gave an overview of range of documents we produce for contract monitoring.

Geoff highlighted that the organisational performance RAG (red, amber, green) rated document has been produced for Board to monitor performance and most areas are showing green indicating that they are on target. The one area showing as amber is social media where we can see that fewer people are using Facebook now.

It has been another very busy quarter as can be seen within the Project and Activity document. Geoff gave further information on the variety of projects we are scoping and currently working. It has also been a very busy period for signposting.

It was a very busy period leading up to the end of March and continued to be with lots of activity around recruitment of Trustees and a new Chief Executive as well as conducting inductions.

Fiona added that we have recently recruited James Davis in the Project Manager (Comms) role who is taking the lead on producing the annual report. A new part of the role is to co-ordinate our social media. He has already started to make plans around developing our online presence, reviewing these and targeting audiences.

In response to a query on which website page/report is most visited Fiona responded to say that this is the 'Finding and NHS dentist' information. Board discussed ensuring that outcomes and impact is always reflected in our work and messages. The strength of the compliments were also commented upon.

#### **5. Signposting and holding to account 6 monthly report**

Alice talked to the report highlighting that it was the busiest period ever for our signposting service. Because the signposting service gathers unsolicited information clients normally present with quite complex situations and issues however we also do hear from people wanting to give feedback only.

Alice highlighted that primary care and acute hospitals were the main source of issues that we heard about. Themes for primary care include access to GP services, lack of range in formats and lack of communication and explanations. Acute hospital feedback also speaks to issues regarding communication and waiting times. In the area of mental health issues include long waits, communication and lack of explanations and the feeling of not feeling listened to. We continue to hear about dentistry; routine appointments not being available, being removed from lists without realising and in urgent need of dental care and not being told about the 111 service.

Geoff added that holding to account happens via two routes: he and Alice meet with the Directors of Nursing and equivalents to raise issues and these are complemented by the Chair and Chief Executive meetings with Trusts and organisations where broader and more strategic messages/issues are raised. There is generally a positive reaction and response to us. Geoff thanked Alice for the way in which she deals with often challenging issues presented by clients and expressed how highly regarded Alice is by partners and clients alike.

In response to a query about whether social care contacts have always been low, Alice explained that we have always received more NHS queries. Sometimes this is due to web search indexing.

Geoff added that within contract negotiations we have been exploring how we can encourage Adult Social Care Service managers to promote the opportunity to people to raise issues.

#### **6. Finance – Management accounts as at March 2024**

Alan reminded the meeting of the financial model and gave an overview the final accounts at year end, March 2024. He explained that:

- Staff costs equate to just over 80% of the organisations overall spend and we were slightly overspent in this area
- We have made savings in non-staff costs
- There is an additional 15k of funding from HCC included an increase due to inflation
- Revenue generation brought in nearly 75k (including 15k contract variation from HCC)
- At year end reserves are 389k

Board accepted the accounts which have been put to the auditors and will be submitted to the Charity Commission.

#### **7. Board Advisory Committee (BAC)**

Alan updated that the Board Advisory Committee had a productive meeting discussing the organisational performance and contract monitoring as well as out contract negotiations. Additionally there was a deep dive into research and signposting as well as an analysis and risk assessment of the budget and revenue generation for the next year.

#### **8. Any other business including questions from the public - NA**

#### **9. Part 2 – Closed**

**Next formal meeting of the Board: Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024**