

Minutes of the Council of Governors Meeting held on Wednesday 24th August
2022, MS Teams, 6.00pm – 7.45pm

Present:

Public Governors:

Pam Brown, Luton	Linda Grant, Central Bedfordshire
Judi Kingham, Luton	Michael Carter, Central Bedfordshire
Sean Driscoll, Luton	Jacquie Farhoud, Bedford Borough
Theresa Driscoll, Luton	Teena Ferguson, Bedford Borough
Wendy Cook, Luton	Jenny Gallucci, Central Bedfordshire
Marie France Capon, Luton	Chris Williams, Bedford Borough
Helen Lucas, Hertfordshire	Robert Oakley, Bedford Borough
Dilan Joshi, Hertfordshire	Debbie Gardiner, Central Bedfordshire

Staff Governors:

Noreen Byrne, Volunteers
Malik Farooq, Administration and Clerical

Appointed Governors:

Dr Alice Mortlock, UCL
Cllr. Javed Hussain, Luton Borough Council
Cllr. Charles Royden, Bedford Borough Council

Board of Directors:

Simon Linnett, Chair	David Carter, Chief Executive
Steve Hone, NED	Liz Lees, Chief Nurse
Ian Mackie, NED	Gill Lungley, Digital Director
Gordon Johns, NED	Catherine Thorne, Director of Quality & Safety
Mark Prior, NED	Fiona MacDonald, Director of Culture
Simon Barton, NED	
Tansi Harper, NED	

In attendance:

Donna Burnett, Trust Board Secretary (minutes)
Victoria Parsons, Associate Director of Corporate Governance
Anne Thevarajan, FT Membership
Jenny Kelly, Corporate Governance Manager
Stephen Mason, Chief Nurse and Information Officer

1. Chair's Welcome and Note of Apologies

The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Dimpu Bhagawati, Matthew Borg, Cathy Jones, Matt Gibbons, Paul Tisi, Janet Graham, Belinda Chik, Louise Grant, Yvette King, David Simms, Malcolm Lea, Annet Gamell, Pat Quartermaine, Terence Haynes-Smith and Hina Zafar.

The Chair introduced and welcomed Dr Alice Mortlock to her first meeting of the Council of Governors as newly appointed governor for the University College London (UCL).

2. Any Urgent Items of Business and Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest or urgent items of business.

H Lucas drew attention to the discussions and concerns around outpatients and outpatient letters, and requested that an update be provided at a future seminar meeting. It was agreed that this would be organised.

ACTION: To organise a session on outpatients at a future seminar meeting (D Burnett)

3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th May 2022

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th May 2022 were APPROVED as a true and accurate record.

4. Action Log

Governors noted the action log and the progress made on many of the actions.

Action 5: To review security plans for each site: incident outside of hospital: Governors were informed that the Trust was still going through the process of re-contracting security services, with the intention to have site specific security services at both Bedford and Luton Emergency Departments (ED)

5. Chair's Report

The Chair provided an update to governors on key areas of observation from the hospital sites which included:

- The current immense stress on the emergency department, with very busy waiting areas and ambulance waits at both Trust sites;
- The car parking situation at the Luton site was becoming difficult and very busy. Alternatives were now being considered around the parking system with the redevelopment team members;
- Many of the hospital beds were now at maximum capacity despite it being summer. Support was being provided both nationally and at local level, with finance involved to try to resolve the situation and the Trust would continue to apply pressure to gain that support;

- There was currently no clear strategy for the hospital and Non-Executive Directors had commenced the process of writing an outline strategy document which would be flexible in nature, focusing on issues that would need to be addressed;

D Joshi queried how the Trust was managing with the heat and operational pressures and asked what plans were in place to prepare for other challenging weather.

D Burnett pointed out that the operational team had recently submitted an Adverse Weather Policy which had been approved, and covered planning for all extremes of weather from very cold to very hot.

6. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive highlighted a number of key areas of activity for governors to note which included:

There had been a CQC visit to both the Luton and Bedford hospital sites, with focussed arrangements for each site and separate letters to each site. The second part of the visit would be around the Well-Led domain. As a consequence of the visit there would be new ratings provided for both ED and medicine at the Luton site. Less clear was that Bedford currently had no standard ratings bar maternity. The CQC visit had gone well overall and no major issues had been found apart from some low level concerns, and it was hoped that Bedford maternity would improve its current rating following the immense work undertaken by the team.

L Lees stated that the visit had taken place at the hottest time of the year and that the teams who had met the CQC had been very positive in their feedback despite the huge amount of pressure they had been working under.

J Farhoud queried why Bedford had no ratings. D Carter explained that the Bedford ratings were no longer the standard, but that new ratings would be issued in medicine.

Concerns were raised that inspecting each Trust site as separate did not look good as a joint organisation, and that the CQC should be considering the Trust as a whole. V Parsons explained that they had looked at the Trust as a joint organisation in terms of the websites and file checking, which would be undertaken in September as part of the Well-Led review. V Parsons added that at present the CQC would be issuing site based ratings, for Bedford: medicine and maternity; L&D: ED and medicine; and that the Trust would need to be clear on how that might look for the organisation as a whole.

7. Covid-19 Update/ Recovery Plans

L Lees stated that due to operational pressures, the Trust had dipped in and out of OPEL 4, triggering staff to be spread into contingency areas. At present there were 56 Covid patients at the Luton site and 10 at the Bedford site with no patients in critical care. Staff absenteeism due to Covid had decreased but still remained challenging.

L Lees reported that plans to roll out the flu jab for staff was underway with a planned late September date. The Covid vaccine would have to be delivered by 1st December, and plans would have to be made on how to deliver the programme in terms of staffing, site locations and management of patients.

Urgent and emergency care had impacted on recovery plans with OPEL 4 being implemented and the biggest operational challenges remained with cancer and emergency care. In summary the performance indicators had proved extremely challenging over the last six to nine months.

8. Performance Reports:

Quality

L Lees stated that there was little to report on harm free care which continued to be monitored, with the key challenges on understanding why complaints had increased in particular around communication. A deep dive would be undertaken to understand the issues better. Governors noted that there were also lots of compliments.

C Thorne reported that there had been two serious incidents relating to ophthalmology delays. These would be monitored by the Quality Committee and all improvement actions would be implemented and learned from.

W Cook queried staff sickness levels in relation to serious incidents. L Lees replied that although there remained high vacancy rates in the midwifery workforce, the Trust now had thirty five international midwives in the process of being approved, and the apprenticeship programme had also had a positive impact on filling midwifery vacancies.

J Farhoud asked for assurance on how the overseas midwives were managed and trained. L Lees provided assurances that all midwives were booked into the training centre to ensure that they fully completed and achieved the Nursing Midwifery OSCE Test of Competence.

Finance:

D Carter reported that the Trust had a modest surplus and were in a fairly good position.

The capital plan was going well and work continued on the acute main block scheme, drawing down funds as required and this reflected well on the region. D Carter pointed out that the Trust was not building more beds but would be looking to find solutions alongside additional winter funding.

Workforce:

F MacDonald reported that recruitment was quite positive, and that the Trust's sickness absence was not high in comparison to other organisations.

Support for staff would continue to be ongoing to ensure staff felt appreciated and valued especially during the difficult times of working under pressure and with the added CQC visit. A number of activities had been organised through creative arts with music and singing, embracing talent within the organisation.

F MacDonald explained that the Trust continued to focus on how to improve compliance in mandatory training and appraisals by embracing different methods of how to undertake the training and keep that compliance moving forward. Work was also in place to improve the appraisal meeting process to ensure it was carried out in a more meaningful way.

W Cook stated that she had liked the hot chocolate seminars and art work with the random acts of kindness and suggested that this was something that governors could take forward.

Governors agreed that the ideas were both thought provoking and interesting.

T Ferguson queried whether compliance by mandatory training could be split into differing staff groups as doctors could not practice unless fully validated. F MacDonald agreed to look into this but assured governors that all clinicians were monitored in line with professional registrations and validation to ensure they were fit to work.

10. Lead Governor Report

Governors were informed that the election had now closed with the results now available on the website and in the Board Secretary report.

H Lucas welcomed back Sean Driscoll, Malik Farooq and David Allen who had been successfully re-elected to the Council of Governors.

H Lucas thanked those governors whose terms had ended including Brian Herbert, Malcolm Lea, Matthew Borg and Sunny Patel.

H Lucas stated that there were two long standing governors whose terms would end due to the constitutional changes, Marie France-Capon and Pam Brown. H Lucas stated that P Brown had been instrumental in the organisation, both as a Staff Governor and Public Governor, through her work on public engagement, membership and communication group and health events, as deputy lead governor and her outstanding work as a volunteer and charity ambassador. H Lucas thanked both governors for their contribution and work on behalf of the Trust.

There would be a formal welcome to all new governors at the Annual Members meeting on 23rd September and an opportunity to say goodbye to departing governors.

11 Board Secretary Report

The Board Secretary Report had been taken as read.

D Burnett explained that all governor groups would be reviewed in light of the changes to the Council of Governors following the recent elections. The review would take place following the Annual Members Meeting in early October.

12. Report from the Membership and Communications Group

P Brown reported that the new Ambassador magazine would be distributed in early September. A health event lecture on ophthalmology would take place in Luton on 11th October. The Annual Members meeting would take place on Friday 23rd September.

R Oakley pointed out that the date of the event was not ideal on a Friday evening. V Parsons acknowledged the challenge but pointed out that there had been issues with acquiring a location fairly last minute.

L Grant added that there were a number of big social events for governors to be engaged with and would share details of these with governors.

The interim membership strategy had been submitted for approval. There were no comments.

DECISION: The Council of Governors APPROVED the Interim Membership Strategy

13. Report from the Constitutional Working Group

H Lucas reported that NHSEI were currently updating the Code of Governance. Members of the Group with Tansi Harper NED had reviewed the draft versions and responded with their comments and concerns. The Code of Governance had not yet been published but once issued, the group would meet again to consider the updated governance in line with the Constitution.

14. Report from the CoG Remuneration and Nomination Committee

H Lucas informed the Council of Governors that the Committee had undertaken a recruitment process for the Chair recruitment and had appointed Gatenby Sanderson to work with the Trust.

The recruitment process would commence from September 2022 which would provide an adequate handover with the current Chair's term ending in March 2023.

Governors NOTED and RATIFIED the appointment of Gatenby Sanderson to work with the Trust on the Chair appointment

15. Governor Working Group Reports

The governor working group reports were noted. N Byrne queried what was happening with the car parking and the Apcoa contract. M Prior replied that the contracts would be updated shortly.

M Carter queried the issue with increased falls. L Lees replied that there is a large piece of work going on around discharge and agreed to pick this up as part of the improvement work.

16 Any Other Business

R Oakley queried why the wait for blood tests was up to three weeks again when it had been agreed to get this down to a week. L Lees agreed to look into this again with C Jones.

17. Time and Date of Next Meeting:

Council of Governors Meeting: Wednesday 16th November 2022

Question from Member of the Public:

Ivor Parrish queried why there was not a clearer and more transparent process for eligibility for election which would ensure that those persons who did not meet the criteria were taken out earlier from the election process. V Parsons responded that the elections were undertaken by an independent organisation and not the Trust, but agreed to look into this in light of the comment. R Oakley requested that this be an agenda item for the Constitutional Working Group to investigate in light of the Model Election Rules.

ACTION: Model Election Rules – Agenda item at the next CWG.

Close of Meeting: 7.45pm