

**MINUTES**  
**of a meeting of the Governance Board**  
**12 March 2024**  
**(13.30-16:00)**  
**At Queen's Court**

**Present:**

**Anne-Marie Dean, Chairman**  
**Ian Buckmaster, Company Secretary**

**Bev Markham, Community Support Officer**  
**Carole Howard, Office Administrator**

**Jenny Gregory, Dawn Ladbrook, Di Old and Val Perry, Members**

**1 Welcome and apologies**

Apologies were received for the absence of Carol Dennis, Paul Rose and Ron Wright.

**2 Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations.

**3 Minutes of meeting held 13 February 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2024 were agreed as a correct record and the Chairman was authorised to sign them.

**4 Finance Report**

Expenditure had been slightly higher than average - £11,837, against the monthly average of £10,299 - because of various adjustments and annual payments made in the month.

The uncommitted amount of funding was now showing a current deficit of £1,589, but income of £9,366 - £5k from NHSNEL and £4,366 from HWB&D on behalf of BHRUT - was still outstanding.

Both sums were due from NHS bodies and requests had been made to them for urgent payment. Payment was not in doubt but whether it would arrive before

the end of the financial year was not known. If the payments were not received in time, some funds would have to be drawn down from the savings account to cover payments due at the year end and for the first few days of the new financial year, until the first quarter's money for 2024/25 was received from the Council.

The bank balances at the end of February were noted.

### Other matters

The Board noted that, on 4 March, the latest payment of interest had been received in the savings account, £23.31, bringing the total interest received this year to £73.61. This was significantly more than had been paid in recent years (but is still a low rate of return on the total amount invested).

## **5 Healthwatch contract - extension**

Formal confirmation had been received that the company's contract with the Council to provide Healthwatch services had been extended until 31 March 2026.

Although the extension has been confirmed, it was not yet certain how much funding would be available but, for working purposes, the assumption was that funding would continue at the same rate as previously.

The contract would terminate when the extension came to an end. In due course, probably in the autumn of 2025, it would be necessary to decide whether to bid for any new contract that might be offered.

## **6 Staff structure changes**

It was reported that, with the pending change in the employment terms of Mrs Markham on 31 March (at her request), the staff structure had been reviewed. It was intended to employ a new Community Support Assistant to undertake a role similar to Mrs Markham's, for which the recruitment process would shortly begin.

Members of the Board would be invited to participate in the recruitment process in due course.

## **7 Havering Place-based Partnership (HPbP) Board**

The Chairman had recently participated in the interviews for the post of Deputy Director Live Well, to which an external candidate had been appointed.

The report on services for the Deaf would be discussed at a coming meeting of the Partnership Board. It was likely that money would be available from the Community Chest Fund to support the Deaf Club.

## **8 NHS North East London/North East London Health and Care Partnership**

The Board noted that the Company Secretary was representing the NEL Healthwatch at meetings of the NHSNEL Finance, Performance and Investment Committee (Finance Committee). At its meeting at the end of February, the Committee had been told that the likely overspend at the end of this financial year was expected to be about £25million, much reduced from previous forecasts, but this was an issue common to NHS ICBs across the country and NHSNEL was better placed than most London ICBs. Provider Trusts had been advised that they needed to develop a culture of avoiding overspending.

Performance had not changed significantly – waiting lists continued to reduce, despite the continuing industrial actions, services for children/young people were good, mental health services were mixed and dementia services were challenging.

NHS Dentistry was likely to be £10million underspent but the savings could not be used generally as that money was ring-fenced.

In the course of a confidential discussion, the possibility of carrying out E&Vs at independent healthcare providers undertaking procedures on behalf of the NHS had been raised and was being explored.

## **9 Safeguarding and Quality - update**

Ms Old reported on several care homes where particular actions were being, or had been, taken. She added that the possibility of an Enter and View visit to the former Lilliputs complex of homes had been welcomed.

## **10 Engagement projects - update**

- **BHRUT Patients' Survey**
  - This project was complete.

Publication had been authorised and was being coordinated with Healthwatch B&D and Redbridge.

- **Long COVID**

- A working group of Public Health Havering, North PCN and others, including us, was looking at what steps were now needed. A training programme for Health professionals was being developed and focus groups of people living with Long COVID would be arranged to inform that training.

Healthwatch would be contributing to that training and leading the focus groups. Contact had been made with people who had responded to the survey to enquire if they might be interested in taking part in these groups – as of the time of the meeting, there had been 11 expressions of interest.

- **NHS Dentistry in NEL**

- This project was on hold pending a response from NHSNEL.

- **Allied Health Professionals in GP practices (AHPs)**

- The project aimed to identify what understanding there was of AHPs and to raise awareness of them.

The survey had closed recently; over 700 responses had been received, of which around 80 came from Havering residents. About 75% of respondents were unaware of AHPs or of their roles within GP practices, showing a clear need for much better publication of information and guidance for patients about the work of AHPs.

Further steps were awaited.

- **Creative Health Havering**

- There have been no developments in this project.

It had recently been announced that Havering's bid to be Borough of Culture had not been successful. The accolade had been awarded to Wandsworth for 2025, and Haringey for 2027.

This did not affect the Creative Health project but further details of its next steps were not yet available.

- **North East London Research Engagement Network (REN)**

- The REN was a collaboration between NHSNEL, research organisations and Healthwatch that undertook surveys etc across North East London.

The latest survey had been launched, aiming to understand how new health treatments and services could be developed to meet the needs of the community.

Incentives were provided for both the people who participate in the survey and, on a per response basis, to the Healthwatch in whose

areas they resided. Arrangements had been made for the research to be promoted through the Friends' Network bulletins and other contacts.

- **Enter & View visits**

- The visit to Queen's Hospital to observe meal time arrangements had been arranged for the end of March.

Following a discussion at the NHSNEL Finance Committee (see minute 8 above), the possibility of carrying out E&V visits to independent healthcare providers contracted to carry out NHS work was being explored.

- **Patient Participation Groups (PPG)**

- HWE had recently drawn attention to the publication by HW Derbyshire of a guide for "establishing and running" PPG networks. Although oriented to the needs of Derbyshire, the guide was generally applicable to PPGs anywhere.

Previously, re-establishing PPGs had been a priority for the company but the lack of staff at HPbP/NHSNEL had hampered progress with it. It was understood however that it was anticipated that an appointment would be made soon, one of whose roles would be to take PPGs forward. Although some PPGs had managed to survive the COVID disruption it was clear that many did not and so across Havering there was need to re-establish them. This, of course, gave an opportunity to reset the whole concept for patients' benefit.

The Board agreed that, once the new postholder was in place, arrangements should be made to work with the HPbP/NHSNEL, PCNs and individual GP practices to restart PPGs across the borough.

## **11 St George's Centre - progress**

An oral report will be made at the meeting on progress with this project.

## **12 Children's Services – Ofsted inspection outcome**

The Board noted that a recent Ofsted report on Havering Children's Services had rated them Inadequate.

According to the Council, improvement plans had been put in place. The Inspectors had acknowledged that there was a good understanding of the areas for improvement and appropriate plans had been in place to address concerns before the inspection took place. Social workers in Havering had complex and higher than average caseloads due to the growth in demand for services,

leading to delays in making support available to children and young people. There was, however, poor management oversight and supervision across social work teams, leading to widespread drift and delay for too many children.

A new Director of Children's Services was now in place and rebuilding services to meet the Ofsted criticisms.

The government had made available some £54million to the Council in 2024/25 to deal with the impending financial crisis that had been threatening Council services.

### **13 Accident & Emergency (A&E) services at Queen's Hospital**

Since the Enter and View visit to A&E in December, there had been evidence of both further deterioration in services and improvement. It was agreed that publication of the report of the visit should be delayed while further enquiries were carried out.

### **14 Bev Markham**

The Board noted that this was the last meeting that Bev would attend in her current post before moving to her new role with the company.

The Board thanked her for the work she had done over the past ten years and looked forward to working with her in a different way in future.

### **15 Next meeting**

The next meeting was due on Tuesday, 16 April 2024 at the office.

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman