

Minutes of the 52nd full Healthwatch Warwickshire Board Meeting
Tuesday 9th March 2021
10.00am to 12.00pm
MS Teams Conference Call

Present:

Liz Hancock (EH) - Chair
Mike Flaxman (MF) - Finance & Audit Chair
John Copping (JC)
Gita Patel (GP)
Katie Weetman (KW)

Paul Tolley (PT) - Vice-Chair
Len Harvey (LH)
Jerry Roodhouse (JR)

In Attendance:

Chris Bain (CB) - Chief Executive (CE), Claire Jackson (CJ) - Head of Operations, Su Jenkins (SJ) - Authorised Representative, Lucy Dean (LD) - minutes, Robin Verso (RV) - observing.

1) Welcome and Apologies

Introductions were made, Robin Verso joined the meeting as an observer. RV will be joining the Board as a Director as of 1st April 2021.

2) Declarations of conflict of interest

Liz Hancock, Chief Executive, Mary Ann Evans Hospice
Jerry Roodhouse, Councillor, Warwickshire County Council

3) Minutes from the previous meeting

The minutes of the Healthwatch Warwickshire (HWW) Board meeting on 12th January 2021 were agreed to be an accurate record of proceedings and were electronically signed by the Chair.

4) Matters Arising

Previous item: HWW to find out whether local homeless hostels are open at the moment - queries have been raised, and we are awaiting to hear back, but we have gained an understanding that the homeless hostels were open and that people experiencing homelessness have been given access to healthcare.

MF highlighted that the Stratford Homeless Project is soon to be open, an opportunity for HWW to make contact.

ACTION: CB/ MF to find more about the Stratford Homeless Project.

One positive thing from the pandemic has been the improved facilities for the homeless, some people being put into permanent residence. It is hoped that the improvements now stay in place, HWW to monitor.

HWW have raised the matter of vaccines among the homeless, in particular rough sleepers, who are most likely clinically extremely vulnerable and should be prioritised.

5) Chair's Report

The Chair attended the Lockdown Taskgroup meeting - a useful strategy working group that is anticipated to continue after the lockdown ends.

Quarterly performance meeting was held with the Commissioner for HWW, which was positive. The Chair and CE attended the Joint Place Forum which covered issues including progress on the CCG merger, tackling health inequalities, and improving health and wellbeing outcomes for the community. Health and Wellbeing Board, an additional meeting to approve the Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2021-2026.

The Chair gave her apologies for the last informal Board meeting as it clashed with another meeting.

The Chair and CE have upcoming meetings with the Chief Executives of Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust and University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire, held with HW Coventry.

New Board members: After a successful interview process, Robin Verso will be joining the HWW Board effective from 1st April 2021. The Chair reported that she also met informally with another potential candidate. It was a positive meeting, however the individual is very busy, so the matter of arranging any further meetings/possible interviews had been left for her to decide. As the Chair has not heard back, it was decided that HWW should make contact again. ACTION: EH to contact potential Board candidate to see if a further meeting is to be arranged.

CB informed the Board that Councillor Les Caborn (Portfolio holder for Adult Social Care and Health) is retiring in May. He has been a good supporter of Healthwatch Warwickshire, it was suggested that the Board write him a letter to thank him for his support and wish him well. ACTION: CB/EH to coordinate to write Les Caborn a letter of thanks on behalf of the Board.

6) Report from Finance and Audit Group

Due to various different reasons, a draft budget has not yet been produced for 2021/22. This year's budget will reflect new ways of working. A board paper was available to the Board ahead of the meeting to consider key principles for the 2021/22 budget.

Within the budget, salaries will be considered, taking into account changes made within the current year. These will be reviewed and presented to the Board in May. HWW will review the contract for external HR support to ensure that HWW have the advice and support that suits a small organisation. It was understood that after the review the Board may have to consider other options for HR support.

Replacement equipment & technology will be considered as part of the budget.

The budget will consider events and projects including standing conference, health and social care forum, the carers project and a second phase of the RAP project.

As part of the budget a pay award for staff will be considered, CPI is at 1% and inflation may rise to 2%, however MF reported that the pay awards policy is based on previous year's funding, not forecast. MF recognised the hard work of the staff over the last 12 months. At the last meeting with the Commissioner, the issue of inflation funding for years 4 and 5 of the contract was raised, and a case will be submitted to the Commissioner. It is estimated that by October, HWW will have absorbed £20,000 in inflationary costs over the previous 3 years of the contract. We will be looking for an increase in funding to reflect inflation.

It was noted that all budgets within Warwickshire County Council services receive an inflation increase.

It was recalled that in the past Healthwatch had HR advice from a particular individual, who is familiar with Healthwatch and how it works. She now works for the Royal College of Nursing. CB offered to contact her to see if she is still working in HR. However, it was noted that advice from a single individual has not worked well in the past and may not be appropriate. MF's personal view was that NHS Arden and GEM, that works with the GP Federation may be more appropriate as they are familiar with working with smaller organisations.

KW expressed that she had some thoughts about pay awards. MF commented that any input would be welcome, and that the policy is driven by what is affordable.

The CE clarified that HWE produce an annual report on the Healthwatch network, which includes matters such as pay; and the NCVO, National Council for Voluntary Organisations produce a report on The State of the Sector, which would be good background reading - as HWW pay rates are probably closer to the voluntary sector than the NHS.

All board members accepted the proposed budget principles as presented in the paper, with the final budget to be discussed and approved at the May Board meeting.

Progress report on the 2021/22 budget to be given at the next informal board meeting. The Board expressed their thanks to MF for his hard work on the Budget over the last few weeks; it is clear that the finances of the organisation are tightly managed.

7) CE's Report and Update on Emerging Strategic Issues

The CE report was distributed to the Board in advance of the meeting.

The CE highlighted the Healthwatch England (HWE) Draft Priorities (item 7.1), which are still under consultation. CB and CJ had some comments, which have been fed back to HWE but on the whole it aligns to HWW's work. Comments from the Board were invited.

ACTION - CB to circulate details of next HWE Committee meeting when made available - anyone can register to attend but places fill up quickly.

The CE discussed the Expenditure report.

A Memorandum of Understanding is to be put in place with Healthwatch Coventry (HWC), and a team meeting to be held together with HWC to develop relationships and ways of working.

ACTION: CB to invite HWC staff to a HWW team meeting.

A small steering group was suggested with a few board members from each HW.

HWW have raised the issue of the lack of access to NHS Dentistry in the County, particularly in the Rugby area. We are hearing from a lot of people who cannot access a dentist, with some managing by taking painkillers for dental pain, including children. Part of the problem is that dentistry is not commissioned by the CCGs.

8) Head of Operations Report

CJ reported on the lockdown task group meeting. A Restoration of Services document has been produced, looking at what services were provided pre-pandemic, what is being provided now and what can be provided after the pandemic.

The Decision-making policy has been discussed (a short document to go on the website explaining how HWW use the articles of association to make decisions). The document will be taken to the next task group meeting for approval.

Priority project update: Carers' project - at the point of developing an online survey and a paper version to be distributed. The project aims to gather views of carers and also people who might not identify themselves as carers but are providing care for others. The council are reviewing Warwickshire's Joint Adult Care Strategy and HWW carers project will feed into the review, we have worked closely with providers and commissioners to ensure the work will be relevant. The survey is about to go into testing.

The Shipston engagement work has come to an end and the report is currently being drafted. We were very pleased to gain over 500 responses. 47 of the responses were from paper copies which is very good considering the constraints due to current lockdown restrictions. HWW freepost address has helped. The survey has shown there is support for the health and wellbeing centre.

The care homes calls have started up again: Robyn leading this project with the volunteers making the majority of the calls. Updates on the Support for Care homes project are available to view on our website. <https://www.healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk/news/2021-03-04/support-care-homes-project-update>

Exception reporting - HWW is not currently undertaking Enter & View visits or face-to-face engagement work in line with current guidance.

PT gave his apologies and left the meeting.

JC suggested contacting Kate Morrison, Maria Fennel at Springfield Mind, and Michael at Carers Heart of England for input on testing the Carer's project survey.

9) Volunteer report

SJ reported that there was a Volunteers Forum last month, ably chaired by Terry Bennett (a relatively new volunteer to HWW). There was a discussion on vaccinations. It was noted that GPs are now getting paid to deliver vaccinations to people that are housebound. Talk of electronic health records being made available at South Warwickshire Foundation Trust for patients to be able to view.

News from the Cancer board for HCP - it is anticipated that more patients will be coming forward for late diagnosis, more patients are already presenting with stage 4 cancers at UHCW now. Screening services are having problems getting started again. South Warwickshire Foundation Trust are getting referrals from Birmingham and Solihull due to delays at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, adding to the challenges. Care Homes project has been very interesting - building bridges and supporting care homes.

SJ attended a meeting on Health Excellence through Technology, which is going well but SJ cautioned them not to leave behind digitally excluded patients.

CJ added that the patient portal started in late February and is being trialled in 4 specialities: Gynaecology, Gastroenterology, Dermatology and Rheumatology. HWW have had a patient get in touch to say they have been unable to use it. After carrying out the public engagement for the project, HWW did recommend that SWFT came back to us for testing before they went live - CJ intends to get in touch with them to see if testing was carried out before launching the portal.

10) AOB

None

11) Confidential

12) Date of next meeting

The next Board meeting will be held online via MS Teams, from 10.00am to 12.00pm on Tuesday 11th May 2021.

Other upcoming meetings:

Informal Directors' briefing meeting - 13th April at 10am via MS Teams.

Lockdown Task group meeting - 26th April at 11am via MS Teams

ACTION: LD to email everyone with future meeting dates.

Summary of Actions:

Item 4: CB/ MF to research the Stratford Homeless Project.

Item 5: EH to contact potential Board candidate to see if a further meeting is to be arranged.

Item 5: CB/EH to coordinate to write Councillor Les Caborn a letter of thanks on behalf of the Board.

Item 7: CB to circulate details of next HWE Committee meeting when made available.

Item 7: CB to invite HW Coventry staff to a HWW team meeting.

Item 12: LD to email everyone with future meeting dates.

Minutes Approved by:

Signed:

Date: