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**ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS 2024**

**COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS REPORT**

**Annual Review of Council Year 2023/24**

**(To be formally presented at the Annual Members Meeting)**

**On Wednesday 25 September 2024**

Presented by Brian Wilson, Lead Governor

September 2024**Purpose**

This report provides an overview of the work of the Council of Governors of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust that has taken place since the last annual meeting.

## Background

Governors play a very important role in our Trust, acting as a link between our Board, our members and the wider public. Governors add a level of public scrutiny to NHS Foundation Trusts. The Council of Governors has a number of statutory responsibilities. The Council is not responsible for managing the Trust but does hold the Non-Executive Directors to account for the performance of the Trust. It also has the authority to appoint and remove the Chair and other Non-Executive Directors.

## Review of the Last Year – 2023/24

### 2.1 Governor Elections and Appointments

Public Governor Elections were held in the following constituencies. The following Governors were elected:

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| **Constituency** | **Name of Governor Elected** |
| Bracknell | * Brian Wilson (re-elected) * Madeline Diver (re-elected) * Hilary Doyle |
| Reading | George Mathew |
| Slough | Aryan Sharma |
| West Berkshire | Ros Crowder (re-elected) |
| Rest of England | Dr John Featherstone |

There was also an election for:

A Non-Clinical Staff Governor and Guy Dakin was re-elected.

The following new partnership Governors were appointed to the Council:

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| **Name of Partnership Organisation** | **Name of Governor** |
| Reading Borough Council | Cllr Jacopo Lanzoni |
| AgeUKBerkshire TBC | Fiona Price |

### 2.2 Council of Governor Meetings

There are four quarterly meetings to conduct formal business and to receive reports from the Trust Board and Executive on Trust performance. All governors are involved, and these meetings are open to the public. Areas of focus are patient safety and service quality together with financial sustainability. Governors are broadly satisfied with the assurances given.

In addition, there are four informal quarterly ‘joint’ meetings – two with the Trust Board and two with only the Non-Executive Directors. These allow governors to explore a broader range of subjects involving the Trust. Governors also have an opportunity to meet with the Non-Executive Directors in small groups at the joint meetings to discuss the performance of the Trust and to raise any issues and/or concerns.

The Chair holds online monthly informal “coffee morning” meetings which are open to all governors to attend. These meetings provide an opportunity for governors to have a conversation with the Chair and to raise any issues of concern and/or suggestions for improving the interface between the Council and the Trust Board.

Governors have the opportunity to attend and participate in the AGM.

Formal meetings were held online in September 2023, December 2023 March 2024 and June 2024.

Informal Joint meetings were held in person/online in November 2023 and February 2024, May 2024 and July 2024.

Recordings of the formal public Council meetings were published on the Trust’s website.

At these meetings Governors received briefings on a range of topics, including:

* Strategic Updates on the Integrated Care Boards
* Update on the Trust’s Strategy Review
* Trust’s Work to Reduce Assaults on Staff
* Trust’s Quality Improvement Programme
* The Support Hope and Recovery Online Network (**SHaRON**) - a secure and confidential online platform, moderated by clinical staff, to enable patients to support each other and get expert advice
* Younger People with Dementia Charity Presentation
* Presentation on the Trust’s Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Engagement
* Feedback on the Trust’s NHS Staff Survey Results
* Staff Health and Wellbeing Programme
* Trust’s Plan to Relocate Jubilee Ward
* Individual Executive Directors’ Key Challenges and Opportunities in their Portfolio Areas in 2024-25
* Individual Non-Executive Directors’ Key Challenges and Opportunities for the Trust
* Trust’s “Bright Ideas” Programme
* The Role of Allied Professionals in the Trust
* Carers Strategy Update

At the joint meetings, Governors have an opportunity to question members of the Trust Board and the Non-Executive Directors.

### Council of Governors’ Appointments and Remuneration Committee

The Appointments and Remuneration (A&R) Committee is a group of governors responsible for recruiting Non-Executive Directors and the Trust Chair.

The A&R Committee also meets with the Trust’s Senior Independent Director to agree the Chair’s appraisal process and the Senior Independent Director feeds back the outcome of the Chair’s appraisal process to the A&R Committee.

The A&R Committee is responsible for reviewing the Chair and Non-Executive Director’s remuneration. The A&R Committee agreed to recommend to the Council of Governors that the remuneration of the Chair and Non-Executive Directors be increased by 5% for 2023-24.

The A&R Committee recommended to the Council of Governors that, if possible, terms of office should be managed to limit the frequency of appointments to one new director a year. This is in recognition of the time it takes to learn about the Trust and to become an effective member of the board.

The Council of Governors followed the A&R Committee’s recommendation and re-appointed Rajiv Gatha, Non-Executive Director for a second three-year term. The Council of Governors also extended the terms of office of Mark Day and Naomi Coxwell, Non-Executive Directors by one year.

### 2.4 Governor Working Groups

There are three other Governor Committees which meet four times a year.

**Quality Assurance Group**

The group meets quarterly, and its purpose is to consider and provide assurance to the Council of Governors on quality related matters.

* The group reviews the Trust’s quarterly Patient Experience Reports which provides details of complaints, Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALs) contacts and the outcome of formal complaints referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.
* At each meeting the group reviews an anonymised complaint, including the Trust’s response to gain assurance about the Trust’s complaints process.
* The group reviews a quarterly report on Trust’s waiting times for individual services at each meeting.
* Pre-viewing the Trust’s Quality Account is a regular part of the Group’s annual program. The Lead Governor shared the Trust’s 2023-24 Quality Account with governors who were given the opportunity to offer comments. These comments are appended to the published report which is now available on the Trust website.
* Members of the group follow a programme of service visits ‘to look at quality through non-professional eyes.

Since the 2023 AGM, Governor Visits to services have included:

* CAMHS Berkshire East Specialist Community Teams (Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead) – Children and Families and All Age & Learning Disability Service, Upton Hospital
* Minor Injuries Unit, West Berkshire Hospital
* East Berkshire Adult Community Mental Health Team (Community Mental Health Team), Churchill House
* Prospect Park Hospital and attendance at Protocols In Practice meeting
* Neurodiversity Service (ADHD and Autism Assessment Team) – Children and Families and All Age and Learning Disability Service
* Berkshire Integrated Hub, Wokingham Hospital
* Assessment and Rehabilitation Centre (ARC) St Marks
* Hi-Tech Care (Physical Health East)
* Community Nursing Service for Reading and West Berkshire
* Bladder and Bowel Service

The Quality Assurance Group discusses governor feedback about their visits and the visit reports are shared with the Trust Board’s Quality Assurance Committee.

**Membership and Public Engagement**

The group meets quarterly, and its purpose is to support Trust membership and to support Governor engagement with members and the public.

* This group supports the Trust in public events and the Trust Membership Strategy for maintaining a representative selection of members.
* Public Membership, representing almost 1 million people of Berkshire, stands at 7,262 (as at April 2024). The profile of membership is regularly reviewed in relation to area and diversity.
* The group supports the Trust’s use of social media to improve the spread of knowledge about the Trust, its services, membership and Governors’ activities. All popular channels are used by the Trust’s communication team.
* The group suggests ideas for articles to include in the Trust quarterly Membership Newsletter.

**Living Life to the Full**

* The group meets quarterly, and its purpose is to champion good practice that enables people to live their lives to the full beyond diagnosis by supporting autonomy, expertise, and well-being. The Group helps to encourage understanding, collaboration and innovation across the boundaries of the Trust in the areas of patient well-being and autonomy by increasing knowledge and understanding.
* Partner organisations including statutory bodies, the voluntary sector and user groups are invited to give presentations at the quarterly meetings of the group.
* The main items reviewed during the year have been: -
* A presentation from the Chief Executive of SupportU; a charity supporting LGBTQ+ people across Berkshire.
* A presentation from Charity No.5 that offers counselling and mental health support to young people and their families living in the RG postcode area.
* An update on the Trust Carers Strategy from Katie Humphrey, Carers Lead providing context and an understanding of what underpins the strategy. The group receives a carers update at the meetings every 6 months.
* A presentation from the Chief Executive of Autism Berkshire. They are responsible for Berkshire West NHS autism and ADHD pre-assessment and post diagnosis service.

Each meeting also includes a round-up of information about local support groups in Berkshire from members of the group.

### 2.5 Trust Board Meetings

The Trust holds six public Trust Board meetings a year. There are also five private ‘discursive’ meetings where emerging strategy is discussed.

From April 2020 the public meetings, which are held online, have been recorded and published on the Trust’s website. This enables both governors and the public to watch the meeting. Governors and members of the public have an opportunity to submit questions to the Board which are answered at the Board meeting.

## Other Activities

**External Auditors**

The Council of Governors is responsible for appointing the Trust’s External Auditors. The Council of Governors appointed Ernst and Young as the External Auditors in March 2021. Ernst and Young attended our meeting in September 2023 to present their opinion on the Trust’s Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23.

The Council of Governors re-appointed Ernst and Young as the Trust’s External Auditors.in March 2024.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Awareness Session**

Governors attended an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Awareness section in November 2023.

**Service Visits**

A number of Governors have made visits to the Trust’s services to meet staff and to gain a better understanding about the work of the Trust. Governors produce reports of their visits which are discussed at the Council of Governors Quality Assurance Group and at the Trust Board’s Quality Assurance Committee as well as being shared with the Director of Nursing and Therapies.

## Looking Ahead

The Trust, like the whole of the NHS, continues to face very challenging times with pressure to maintain quality of service as demand continues to rise, while at the same time there are considerable financial constraints and national workforce shortages.

Social care continues to be underfunded and this impacts demand and outcomes for our mental health and community health services.

The new world of ‘system working’ presents both challenges and, we hope, opportunities to improve healthcare for the people of Berkshire.

As the Trust moves forward in this complex and uncertain world there will be much for Council to follow in maintaining oversight on performance and to ensure that the needs of patients are kept at the forefront of decision-making.

Please get in touch if you are interested in our work! We are also keen to meet those who would like to join us as governors of the Trust. You may send questions on this report or any other matter to the Trust’s Company Secretary – by email to: [Julie.hill2@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:Julie.hill2@berkshire.nhs.uk) or post to Julie Hill, Company Secretary, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, London House, London Road, Bracknell, RG12 2UT.

Governors may be contacted directly or via the Company Secretary or via email; to: [governor@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:governor@berkshire.nhs.uk)

**Brian Wilson,** Lead Governor

September 2024