



**Berkshire Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

**ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS 2020**

**COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS REPORT**

**Annual Review of Council Year 2019/20**

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

**On Wednesday 23 September 2020**

Presented by: Paul Myerscough, Lead Governor  
September 2020

## Purpose

This report provides an overview of the key work and developments of the Council of Governors of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust since the last annual meeting.

## 1. Background

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.

## 2. Review of the Last Year – 2019/20

### 2.1 Governor Elections and Appointments

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

Constituency	Name of Governor Elected
Reading	Due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements election was paused. An election will take place in September 2020.
Slough	Ruffat Ali-Noor elected (uncontested) <i>Unfortunately, there was no candidate for second vacancy in this constituency.</i>
Rest of England	<i>Unfortunately, there were no candidates for this constituency in the last round of elections</i>

There was also an election for:

- Clinical Staff Governor and Natasha Berthollier was re-elected.
- Non-Clinical Staff Governor and June Carmichael was re-elected.

The following new partnership Governors were appointed to the Council:

Name of Partnership Organisation	Name of Governor
Reading Borough Council	Cllr Deborah Edwards
Alzheimer's Society	Linda Goddard

## 2.2 Council of Governor Meetings

The Council of Governors holds four quarterly meetings to conduct formal business and to receive reports from the Trust Board and Executive on Trust performance. Areas of focus are patient safety and service quality together with financial sustainability. Governors are broadly satisfied with the assurances given. In addition, the Council holds informal joint meetings with the Trust Board and with the Non-Executive Directors.

The full Council met in September 2019, December 2019 and July 2020. Joint meetings were held in November 2019 and February 2020. Meetings were suspended from mid-March 2020 until June 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

- Strategic Planning 2020-21
- An update on the Trust's Patient Experience Work
- System Working – the Chair's Perspective
- A presentation on the Trust's Community Mental Health Teams
- The Role of the Audit Committee
- A presentation on Staff Wellbeing Initiatives
- A presentation on the work of the Trust's Staff Networks
- Equalities and Diversity Training

Governors also had an opportunity to question members of the Trust Board and the Non-Executive Directors.

In June 2020, the Trust held an informal virtual briefing meeting for Governors with the Chair, Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer, Medical Director and the Acting Executive Director of Strategy which was conducted as a Live Broadcast via Microsoft Teams. This meeting included the following topics:

- Year-end Report including the Care Quality Commission's Outstanding rating of the Trust, an update on the Trust's finances and how the Trust was using Digital technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic
- An Update on the Trust's COVID-19 pandemic response
- The Trust's post COVID-19 recovery plan

Governors had the opportunity to submit questions and make points using the 'chat' function which the Executive answered.

## **2.3 Non-Executive Director Appointments and Re-appointments**

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

In September 2019, on the recommendation of the A&R Committee, the Council of Governors agreed to re-appoint the Trust Chair, Martin Earwicker for another three-year term of office when his first term of office expired on 30 November 2019. The Council also appointed a new Non-Executive Director, Aileen Feeney. The Council appointed a new Vice-Chair, Chris Fisher and a new Senior Independent Director, Naomi Coxwell.

Shortlisted candidates for the role of Non-Executive Director are interviewed by the A&R Committee members and meet a Governor Focus Group which provides feedback on the performance of each of the candidates to the Committee.

The A&R Committee started the recruitment process to appoint a new Non-Executive Director and Chair of the Audit Committee to replace Chris Fisher whose term of office was due to expire in September 2020.

When the serious nature of the COVID-19 pandemic became apparent, the Committee proposed to suspend the recruitment process and recommended to Governors that Mr Fisher's term of office be extended by another year. Governors unanimously agreed and the Council ratified the decision at its formal Council meeting in July 2020.

## **2.5 Governor Committees and Meetings**

In addition to the Appointments and Remuneration Committee, there are three other Governor Committees which meet four times a year. Due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements, the sub-committee meetings were paused from mid-March 2020. The Sub-committees re-started in July 2020 and now meet virtually via Microsoft Teams.

### **a) Quality Assurance Group**

- Members of this group review patient feedback about the Trust and follow a programme of service visits 'to look at quality through non-professional eyes'. The Group also discuss quality related matters with the Trust's management and report back to Council.
- There were meetings in November and February and several services were visited. An online meeting was held in June.
- The group called on the Project Leader for the Trust's work on a new patient feedback process to provide a briefing.

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trust has paused visits to clinical services.

#### **b) Membership and Public Engagement**

- This group supports the Trust in public events and its strategy for maintaining a representative selection of members.
- There were two meetings prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and one online meeting since then.
- The public events that governors support on behalf of the Trust mostly happen in spring and summer and unfortunately, because of the pandemic this activity has stopped.
- Before the COVID-19 lockdown two members held a 'Meet Your Governors' event in Reading in order to test the effectiveness of the Trust's Public Engagement policy. With no members attending, it is clear that the Trust has a lot to do in this area.
- Governors believe that stronger public engagement by the Trust could overcome the chronic shortfall of candidates competing in governor elections.

#### **c) Living Life to the Full**

- The purpose of the group is to champion good practice so enabling people to live their lives to the full beyond diagnosis by supporting autonomy, expertise, and well-being. The Group helps to develop this philosophy both within the Trust and in its work with partner organisations by promoting training opportunities and supporting mechanisms to share information.

### **2.6 Trust Board Meetings**

The Trust holds seven Public Trust Board meetings a year (there is provision to hold an additional meeting in August if required). The Trust Board also holds four private discursive meetings to discuss emerging strategy.

A rota has been established to ensure that at least two Governors attend the Public Trust Board meeting to observe the conduct of business and the functioning of the Non-Executive Directors. This supports the Governors responsibility for holding Non-Executive Directors to account for the performance of the Trust.

From April 2020, the public Trust Board meeting is a virtual meeting which is recorded and published on the Trust's website. This enables both governors and the public to watch the meeting. From July 2020, governors and members of the public have an opportunity to submit questions to the Board which are answered at the Board meeting.

## 2.7 Integrated Care System Engagement Meetings

The Trust is part of two Integrated Care Systems (ICS), Frimley Health and Care and Berkshire West. Integrated Care Systems bring together NHS Provider organisations, Clinical Commissioners, Local Authorities and others to work in partnership to improve health and care in their area.

**Frimley Health Integrated Care System** held an engagement event on 5 February 2020 with Governors from Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and system leaders including elected members from the Health and Wellbeing Alliance Board.

The event provided us with an opportunity to find out more about the strategic context of the Integrated Care System and about current programmes of work. This was followed by a presentation on the key ambitions for the Integrated Care System's Five-Year Strategy. There were opportunities for round-table discussions to enable Governors to feedback their views and ideas.

## 3 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that the Trust had to change the way it delivers services. For example - many consultations are now held online and via the telephone rather than face-to-face in order to reduce the risk of transmission; social distancing and cleaning regimes have to be observed in clinical settings.

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

As the Trust moves forward in this complex and uncertain world there will be much for Council to do, working with the Trust, to maintain oversight on performance and to ensure that the needs of patients are kept at the forefront of decision-making. No one should underestimate the scale of the challenges we are facing.

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, 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Fitzwilliam House, Skimped Hill Lane, Bracknell, RG12 1BQ.

Governors may be contacted directly or via the Company Secretary or the Trust website.

**Paul Myerscough**, Lead Governor

September 2020