

Chair's report

Purpose

1. To update the board on recent meetings I have attended (see Appendix 1). In addition I have held numerous meetings with our managers and NEDs in person, via zoom/teams and by telephone.

Key issues

2. I am pleased to report that following an extensive and robust process the panel set up by the board has recommended that Jessica Slater be offered the position of CEO of our Healthwatch. There were 32 applications received that were all considered as part of a comprehensive sift process and five applicants were chosen for interview.

Jess will join us on 13th May but her induction has started and she has/will be attending various meetings with managers/staff and GPG and Board before her official start date.

Jess joins us from SERVE a charity she has been with for nine years which helps Older People and People with Disabilities to remain in their own homes. She has been a leader in North Northamptonshire's Integrated Care System.

I know we will all give Jess a warm welcome to the Healthwatch family.

3. I have completed updating our governance arrangements, a draft of which is brought to the board under Items 10 and 10a
4. I have remained in touch with our management team of Caroline, Jo and Jonathan who have ensured the smooth running of the organisation since the resignation of our former CEO at the end of November 2023. I am most grateful for their efforts as I have been for the support offered by Carole.

5. On the 8th and 9th of February I had the pleasure of hosting Professor David Croisdale Appleby's visit to our Healthwatch. David was appointed Chair of Healthwatch England last year. His visit was concentrated on the north of our area and involved a visit to the Healthwatch Fenland Forum in Wisbech and meeting staff, volunteers and managers at our Peterborough office. In the evening he was guest speaker at a dinner with leaders in our health and care system and other Healthwatch NEDs were present. The following day he had further meetings with staff and coffee with Peterborough's MP who sits on the Health Select Committee.

David has told me he greatly enjoyed his visit and learnt much from it. I am grateful to so many of our staff who engaged with David and helped his visit run smoothly.

6. NEDs are reminded that we are entering a period of purdah prior to the Local Elections. An advice note has been sent to all staff and NEDs by our Communications Team. The purdah rules are clear for a public body such as ours and we should adhere to them.
7. I continue to attend the Integrated Care System meetings that I regularly attend plus temporarily others which would normally be covered by our CEO. It is interesting to note that the ICS is in line for financial break even this year which if delivered enables millions of pounds of previous debts to be written off. This is an important step forward in gaining financial stability in our area. Recently there have been many positive initiatives taken to improve health and social care users experiences but I remain concerned that access to GPs and Dentists remain difficult for many as do the long waits for elective treatment. Health and Care services remain underfunded and under staffed with outcomes in many areas worse than other comparative EU countries. Much work is going on locally to improve services and therefore listening to users experiences has never been so important at a time when the service remains under great pressure.

Action required by the Board.

The Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

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18th March 2024

Appendix 1

Meetings attended by the Chair – 31st January to 22nd March 2024

Meeting	Date
Azets new office opening	31 Jan
CEO applicants sift	1 Feb
HWE Regional meeting - Parliamentary Health Ombudsman	6 Feb
HWE Chair visit	8 Feb
HWE Chair visit	9 Feb
CEO interviews	13 Feb
CEO interviews discussion and decision	14 Feb
Meeting new CEO	27 Feb
HWE ICS representatives meeting	29 Feb
Comms team - Board debrief meeting	29 Feb
Combined Authority Mayor meeting	1 Mar
ICB Board meeting	8 Mar
ICB Development meeting	8 Mar
GPG meeting	13 Mar
ICB Development meeting	15 Mar
Joint Health and Wellbeing/ICP Board meeting	22 Mar
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