



**Berkshire Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

**ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS 2021**

**COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS REPORT**

**Annual Review of Council Year 2020/21**

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

**On Wednesday 22 September 2021**

Presented by Paul Myerscough, Lead Governor  
September 2021

## 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.

## 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 – 2020/21

### 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
Bracknell	Madeline Diver Rosemary Stent Brian Wilson
Reading	Tom Lake Paul Myerscough Jon Wellum
Slough	Natasha Afful Ruffat Al-Noor
West Berkshire	Ros Crowder Raymond Buckland
Wokingham	Andrew Horne John Jarvis
Rest of England	Amran Hussain

There was also an election for:

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

The following new partnership Governors were appointed to the Council:

Name of Partnership Organisation	Name of Governor
Young People with Dementia	Mark Hainy
Slough Borough Council	Cllr Natasa Pantelic

## **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 2020, December 2020, March 2021 and June 2021. We also had a single item extraordinary meeting in July 2021 to appoint a new Non-Executive Director.

Joint meetings between the Council and the Board were held in November 2020 and February 2021, May 2021 and July 2021.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings were held online via MS Teams. Recordings of the public Council meetings were published on the Trust's website.

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

- Carers Strategy Update
- Contributing to the development of the Trust's Three-Year Strategy
- Strategic Updates on the Integrated Care Systems
- COVID-19 Pandemic Update
- Quality Improvement Programme Update
- New MSK Pathway for Berkshire West Residents
- Trust's Quality Accounts 2020-21
- Presentation on the Trust's New People Strategy
- Presentation on the Role of the Trust's Speaking Up Guardian
- Update on the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System
- Presentation on the Trust's Support for Veterans
- Feedback on the Trust's NHS Staff Survey Results
- The Trust's Post COVID-19 People Recovery Plan to Support Staff Health and Wellbeing

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

## **2.3 Council of Governors' Appointments and Remuneration Committee**

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

In September 2020, on the recommendation of the A&R Committee, the Council of Governors agreed to re-appoint Naomi Coxwell, Non-Executive Director for another three-year term of office when her first term of office expired on 12 December 2020. The committee also recommended a 1-year extension for Non-Executive Director, Chris Fisher in view of the negative impact Covid-19 would have on finding a replacement as his second term comes to a close.

The Committee re-started the recruitment process in 2021. As part of the selection process, governors who were not members of the A&R Committee were invited to join a focus group where they had the opportunity to interact with the shortlisted candidates. The Committee recommended Rajiv Gatha as the new NED and Chair of the Trust Audit Committee and this was approved by an extraordinary Council meeting held on 28 July 2021.

The A&R Committee is also responsible for overseeing the Trust Chair's annual appraisal, which was conducted by Naomi Coxwell, Senior Independent Director.

## **2.5 Governor Committees and Meetings**

There are three other Governor Committees which meet four times a year. Due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements, the committees met using via Microsoft Teams.

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

- The group discusses quality related matters with the Trust's management and report back to Council.
- 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 complaints referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service. The group also reviews an anonymised complaint together with the Trust's response to gain assurance about the Trust's complaints process
- The group also receives data on the Trust's waiting times for individual services
- 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'. Due to the pandemic, visits to services stopped although Governors were still able to meet staff online. Visits in person have recently re-started with Governors required to take lateral flow tests in advance and to use facemasks when joining a service.

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

- This group supports the Trust in public events and its strategy for maintaining a representative selection of members.
- 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.

- The group was proactive in promoting the latest round public governor elections and all governor vacancies are now filled.

**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.
- During the year, the group received presentations on the Trust's Research and Development work, Staff Health and Wellbeing, Perinatal Mental Health, the Trust's national NHS Staff Survey Results, the work of the Trust's "Purple" Staff Network for Disabled Staff and the Trust's HealthMakers programme which offers peer support to help people manage their long-term health conditions.

## **2.6 Appointment of External Auditors**

The Council of Governors is responsible for appointing the Trust's External Auditors. Six governors volunteered to form a sub-group to evaluate the two bids received and to make a recommendation to the full Council on the appointment of the External Auditors. The sub-group was supported by the Head of Procurement, Director of Finance and the Company Secretary. The full Council meeting approved the sub-group's preferred bidder and appointed Ernst and Young as the Trust's new External Auditors.

## **2.7 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.

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 see the meeting. Governors and members of the public have an opportunity to submit questions to the Board which are answered at the Board meeting.

## **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 and national workforce shortages.

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 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, 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 2021