

Minutes of the Council of Governors

Thursday 28th July 2011

Present:	Michael Cassidy	(Chairman) Chair
	Geoffrey Rivett	(public governor)
	Doug Hiza	(public governor)
	Sarah Weiss	(public governor)
	Suri Freedman	(public governor)
	Florence Osaigbovo	(public governor)
	Patricia Bennett	(public governor)
	Christopher Sills	(public governor)
	John Bootes	(public governor)
	Jamie Bishop	(public governor)
	Dr Lesley Mountford	(partner governor)
	Dr Helen Cugnoni	(staff governor)
	Robert Duke	(staff governor)

In attendance: Nancy Hallett, Chief Executive
Charlie Sheldon, Chief Nurse and Director of Governance
Cheryl Clements, Director of Workforce (item 1 – 5)
Dhilson Davies, Head of Financial Accounts (item 2)
Melanie Mavers, Head of Clinical Quality (minutes)

Three members of the public were in attendance

1. Chairman's welcome

Michael Cassidy chair of the Council of Governors welcomed the Governors and members of the public to the meeting. Members of the public were asked to leave the meeting until the one item of reserved business had been concluded.

2. Reserved Business – Appointment of the Trust External Auditors

Dhilson Davies presented a paper prepared by Stephen Hay Chair of the Audit Committee to recommend the governors approve the appointment of Deloitte LLP to provide the external audit services to the Trust for a three year period from 2011/12.

This proposal was unanimously approved.

3. Apologies: Professor Stanton Newman (partner governor)
Clyde Baker (public governor)
Val Dimmock (staff governor)
Deborah James (partner governor)

There have been two resignations:
Samantha Fontaine
Dr Paul Cannon (staff governor)

The election process for new governors is underway there are vacancies for: three inner constituency, two outer constituency, three clinical staff and one non-clinical staff. Geoffrey Rivett stated that existing governors need to publicise the role of the governor to encourage prospective candidates to self nominate.

4. Minutes of the Council of Governors meeting 23rd June 2011

The minutes from the previous Council of Governors meeting were agreed. Sarah Weiss asked that two points she raised at the last meeting be included in the minutes; changes in the PPI strategy and Patient Experience Committee and that concerns about standards in the maternity service.

5. Revised Single Equalities Scheme

Cheryl Clements presented the Trusts Single Equalities Scheme and action plan 2011-14. This scheme was due for revision and includes the relevant elements of the new Equalities Act 2010. The differences from the previous scheme are; there are additional protected characteristics, public organisations are required to have objectives around equality, some work has started on objectives for the NHS and the Homerton scheme will be updated accordingly as the work progresses. The Trust has to declare compliance with the equality report annually but the requirements are not yet 100% clear. Cheryl Clements is working together with Charlie Sheldon and consultation on the scheme is in progress.

The governors asked whether the Trust had any particular areas of concern, there are no particular areas of concern and common sense is being applied to implementing the scheme. Jamie Bishop asked whether there was overlap in this scheme in terms of health inequalities in the borough and how much the Health and Well Being Board was related to work on equality. Dr Mountford explained that there was overlap and the Health and Well Being Board was working in partnership with Homerton particularly on the strategies from reducing tuberculosis infection, reducing infant mortality and increasing life expectancy. The top priorities are documented in a joint strategic needs assessment, Dr Mountford will be happy to share this document with the Governors.

Sarah Weiss asked whether expert patient programmes would be developed as part of the scheme, Charlie Sheldon stated that this would be part of the new patient and public involvement strategy. Sarah also raised the issue of single sex wards and what this meant at Homerton. Charlie Sheldon clarified that this meant single sex bays within wards in most cases. The Trust is externally audited on single sex arrangements by NHS East London and the City. From April to the week beginning 25th July the Trust had not had a single sex accommodation breach. There had been some this week due to the increased number of emergency admissions.

6. Patient Experience and Quality Report

Charlie Sheldon presented the Patient Experience and Quality Report for May,, he provided a summary of the contents of the report. Data for Community Health Services is now part of the report. In all types of reported incident the Trust is encouraging reporting and aiming for high levels of reporting and low harm rates. Sarah Weiss asked whether the incidents that involved two patients that suffered moderate harm from falls were related to staff being overstretched. Charlie Sheldon responded that the investigations had shown that this was not a factor in these cases and that risk assessments and care plans were in place for these patients.

Incidents, complaints, litigation and PALs queries are reviewed every week at the CLIP meeting which is multi-professional and has representatives of all Divisions. Any common factors are identified and it is possible to carry out an investigation into frequent low harm or no harm incidents.

Visiting Times

Charlie Sheldon explained that the Trust is considering changing general visiting times to the Trust (this does not include; maternity, paediatrics, RNRU or intensive care). The proposal is to have visiting time from 14:30 to 20:00, this will allow patients privacy and dignity in the mornings with washing and dressing, allow more efficient cleaning in the mornings and allow patients to eat and rest prior to visitors arriving. There would always be thoughtful exceptions to any agreed visiting times; relatives of patients who are dying, carers who are involved in a patients care etc. Other hospitals have restricted visiting in this way. Several governors raised that the numbers of visitors was problematic. The proposal would also include limiting the number of visitors (which has been done before) which would need to be enforced by the clinical staff.

Jamie Bishop suggested the Trust carry out an informal survey of visitors that do attend in the mornings to better understand the reasons why morning visiting was utilised.

7. Chief Executives Report

Nancy Hallet presented the Chief Executives report for quarter one. This is the end of the first full quarter as an integrated organisation.

Finance and performance: the Trust budget is on target and there were no MRSA bacteraemias and two C.diff infections in Q1. Activity was above expectations in maternity and neonatal. Some funding has been received for recruitment of more midwives.

Doug Hiza raised the issue of the costs associated with caring for the patient that had sextuplets at the Homerton relatively recently. Nancy Hallet confirmed that the patient had given birth to sextuplets and that as she was not entitled to health care in the UK, the costs of her and the babies stay in hospital were in the process of being recovered. The commissioners were assisting with covering these costs.

There was also confirmation that no hospital can turn away a patients in need of maternity or other emergency care, there is a legal requirement to provide safe care to those in need.

Sarah Weiss stated that she was glad extra funding had been identified for more midwives as she was still hearing about women, in labour, who still had to wait to be seen in the maternity department. Nancy Hallet confirmed that plans were in place to ensure the Labour Ward Co-ordinator was supernumerary (not giving direct care to women) in order that they can manage the unit.

Concerns were raised about nursing ratios in relation to finances. Nancy Hallett agreed that all staff including ward nurses had been under pressure but that the Homerton's staffing ratios are in line with national requirements. Charlie Sheldon confirmed that Homerton's registered nurse ratios are higher than that of other hospitals and there is no evidence that patients are experiencing poor outcomes in relation to numbers of nursing staff on the wards.

Estates: refurbishment of Thomas Audley Ward is in progress and work on the Acute Rehabilitation Unit will follow. Work on the hospital main entrance will begin next week.

The St Leonards site is a concern, the buildings remain the property of NHS East London and the City but due to previous development plans for the site being shelved it is currently unclear what services would be best delivered from St Leonards and whether development of the site will go ahead.

The September Board of Directors meeting will be held there and Nancy Hallet invited the Governors to go and have a look at the St Leonards site.

North East London Health Sector: The Cooperation and Competition Panel are reviewing the proposed merger between Barts and the London, Newham and Whipps Cross hospitals they have issued permission to proceed to the second phase of the proposal but:

“The Panel has concluded that there is a realistic prospect that the merger between Barts and The London, Newham Trust and Whipps Cross Trust may result in a material adverse effect on patients and taxpayers. The CCP considers that further analysis is necessary and will now proceed to Phase II.”

The deadline for completion of phase 2 is 17th November 2011

The CCP are an advisory panel to the Minister, it is likely BLT will continue to develop its business plan concurrently with the CCP phase 2 investigation.

The governors raised concerns about what this could mean for Homerton and whether Homerton was threatened by the merger. Nancy Hallet responded that there was no current threat to the Homerton.

8. Governors Handbook

Charlie Sheldon thanked all the governors for their comments on the draft handbook. The final draft is currently with the designers and once complete will become part of the Foundation Trust folders. A final draft of the designed version will be set round for final comments.

9. Homerton helpers Report

Doug Hiza presented a service evaluation report on the volunteer service Homerton Helpers that had been prepared by Jenny Reindorp. Overall the project to introduce volunteers to the Homerton has been successful, they are an important part of the ward/department team. The Governors want to extend thanks to Jenny Reindorp who was in a fixed term post to set up the scheme. The project has demonstrated good value for money and funds have been identified to make the volunteer coordinator into a substantive post, this person will start in August.

Concern was raised by Florence Osaigbovo that volunteers may be used to replace nursing staff. Charlie Sheldon and Nancy Hallet stated categorically that this is not the case. If volunteers choose to go on and undertake nursing or medical training that is an individual decision.

Helen Cugnioni raised a point in the report, that in some cases volunteers did not feel welcomed by regular trust staff. Helen has agreed for the new volunteer coordinator to contact her in relation to working on this aspect of volunteering in the Trust. Charlie Sheldon confirmed that volunteers need to be welcomed like any other member of staff.

Michael Cassidy thanked Doug Hiza for his work on the project and as this was Dougs last meeting, thanked him for his work as a governor. Doug stated that he plans to continue working with the volunteers.

10. Independent assurance on the Quality Accounts

Charlie Sheldon presented a paper prepared by Phil Johnstone Officer of the Audit Commission. The paper outlines the audit commissions remit in auditing the Trusts Quality Account and concludes that the Homerton Quality Account is in accordance with the NHS Foundation Trust Annual Reporting Manual.

11. Nominations Committee

Michael Cassidy asked the governors if they would volunteer to be part of the nominations committee. Expressions of interests should be given to Geoffrey Rivett. The committee needs five members. Revised terms of reference are being developed with particular attention around achieving a quorum. Previously recommendations have been reported in public and this should be done in private.

12. Any other business

Geoffrey Rivett stated that the Board of Governors is member of the Foundation Trust Governors Association and as such had a vote regarding the chair of the association. A discussion on how to proceed with voting was reached.

Suri Freedman stated that she was aware of some members of the community being discharged from hospital during the times of Shabbat despite informing staff that this was not possible. She had raised this issue at the previous Patient Experience Committee. Charlie Sheldon apologised that this incident had happened and assured the council that reminders relating to the time of the Sabbath were still sent out to staff.

Christopher Sills stated that there was a partner governor who had not attended from Hackney Council for some time and wondered if the partner organisation were going to nominate another person. Lesley Mountford said she will talk to Hackney Council in relation to this.

Sarah Weiss stated that the choose and book system was worrying people and that patients maybe falling through the net in terms of getting appointments – this mainly relates to choose and book around community services. Nancy Hallet stated that there is work going on in relation to this and she will feedback in more detail at the next Council of Governors meeting.

Patricia Bennett stated that there had been previous discussions about having seminars as part of the governors meetings and asked if this was this still going to go ahead. Geoffrey Rivett stated that this meeting was going to contain a seminar but it was not possible to proceed due to the full agenda. Geoffrey is committed to carrying this idea forward and will look at adding subjects into the agenda that are of clinical interest.

September 15th is the next Members meeting and Dr Laurence Gant will be doing a presentation.

13. Questions from Members of the Public.

None.

Next meeting:

15th September Annual members meeting

27th October Council of Governors meeting