

Board meeting minutes.
Monday 24th April 2024
10am – 1pm
Healthwatch office & online (Teams)

Present:

Lee Adams (LA)	Chair
Pat Southgate (PS)	Vice Chairperson
Derek Bodell (DB)	Trustee
Alan Cram (AC)*	Trustee
John Cunningham (JC)**	Trustee
Alison Wood (AW)	Trustee
Ashley Green (AG)	CEO

Apologies:

Laura Parker (LP)	Trustee
Kacie Hodgson (KH)	Trustee

*AC arrived at the meeting at section 3 (business plan) & left the meeting at section 6 (impact reports)

**JC arrived at the meeting at section 5 (finances)

1. Welcome & apologies.

LA welcomed everyone to the meeting & said that apologies had been received from LP and KH.

LA confirmed that this was DB last Board meeting as he was formally stepping down as a trustee, and she, AG & other trustees thanked DB for his help and work since joining as a trustee.

Derek confirmed that he would continue to support Healthwatch as a volunteer around supporting us with fundraising and mentioned to AG about the need to establish a working group to begin this work. AG said that he would be in touch with Derek and others to set up this group.

There were no confidential matters arising.

2. Minutes & Action log – 22nd February 2024 Board meeting

LA and all those present agreed with and accepted the minutes from the Board meeting in February.

AG said that all the actions had been completed from the action log with the only outstanding one being progress against the staff media training which AG said would be part of this year's training for both staff, volunteers and trustees if needed.

3. Draft business plan 2024-25

AG briefly went over the business plan saying that he had included in the plan the totality of work and objectives that he/team sought to deliver over the next year. He said that a large emphasis had been put around our desire to expand our reach and awareness, alongside a focus on demonstrating our impact, including a list of potential funded projects that had been identified.

There was general agreement in this format for the business plan from those trustees present, alongside reflections that we [the team] may be committing to too much work and could we deliver on all of this. Given our limited staffing and budget, trustees felt that there may well be a need to cut back on the number of meetings that we attend. LA gave the example of the Managers meetings that AG attends as part of the West Yorkshire Healthwatch. It was asked if volunteers or trustees could support any of these meetings.

LA asked which of our activities were from core funding and which weren't, and that it would be helpful to distinguish this. PS raised that it would be good to know, for example if we weren't able to deliver on a piece of work why and what the learning was from this. It was raised that some of the outcomes we had included could be more specific (tighter) which AG agreed to look over.

AW offered to help AG review the draft business plan to help make the plan more focused. DB said that this should be seen as a 'living' document which would be reviewed and agreed that it should be more focused. LA asked that trustees let AG know if there were any areas of interest or activities in the business plan that they would like to be involved in and support the delivery of.

AG highlighted that there wasn't [for the time being] any major research piece of work planned due to us waiting to hear about the potential funded projects, alongside the farming community project that was being delivered via the Health Equity Fellowship. AG said that he would review the project work once we were in a better position to know about our funded projects.

4. Projects

AG briefly went over the two main projects – the Health Equity Fellowship project and the application to York St John University which was focused on people self-managing their respiratory disease. AG said that they would only do this project if they were successful with the funded application and if the funding level was sufficient. AG highlighted that they only received a very small proportion of the budget, for the previous project (rurality) from York St John University as the majority of the funding went to the university placement. Both AG & LA said that they could approach other departments at the university or other universities. AG said they would know the outcome of the application by the end of May.

5. Finance

AG briefly went over the end of year accounts for 2023-24. AG said that there was an underspend in the staffing costs as two staff (Lily & Lada) had left and had yet to be replaced, alongside general underspend in trustee costs, staff reimbursement, and our coms & marketing. Our income target of £20,000 was exceeded by £1,600, which gave us an overall twelve-month deficit of -£26,700.

AG talked over the proposed budget for 2024-25 which had been revised to ensure that we weren't overstressing the use of our reserves, but instead taking a more measured approach to recruiting one full time staff member now, and then dependent on our income generation, later this year or next, recruit additional staff where needed. AG said that his preferred staffing in this case would be to recruit a business support officer to take over Helen's role, as she would be moving to the Community Engagement & Project Office role. Trustees agreed that our current finances didn't allow us to recruit AG's original staffing option of one full-time post and one part time post and that the revised budget of only recruiting one staff member now was the right approach. This was agreed by those trustees present.

AC said that had met with AG and he agreed with taking a more measured approach to recruitment, to ensure we weren't using a large proportion of our reserves now, which would give us the scope to plan work and our budget going forward. JC agreed with this alongside reinforcing our ambition to use our coms & marketing budget to build on the great work, reports etc. that we had done.

Trustees present agreed the proposed budget for 2024-25 that AG presented.

6. Impact reports & progress against recommendations

LA said that she was pleased to see from the impact reports that AG had circulated the amount of impact achieved from our various project reports. AG said that there were still a lot of responses to come back from system partners, but overall, the responses and actions taken as a consequence of our reports were positive to date.

AG said that it was now important to share these successes with the public, which he would be working with Craig and Alicia to do. Derek suggested one way of highlighting these successes and the impact achieved could be to produce a full report [state of the health in NY] on the issues we have heard about and what we have achieved. AG said that we could also possibly produce smaller summaries or infographics of our impact. AG agreed to discuss this with his team.

JC highlighted that he had looked over some of the strategies, for example the Humber & NY young people's mental health strategy, which our report's findings had feeding into. But he could not find a reference to our report, despite our report's findings having fed into the strategy. It was felt by all trustees that we need to be firmer around having our work/reports acknowledged.

LA and other trustees suggested that at future Board meetings AG highlight where we are still waiting to hear back from system partners about responses to our recommendations. AG agreed and said we will keep 'impact' as an ongoing agenda item at future meetings.

AG spoke briefly about the impact measurement criteria that he had produced. There was general agreement for this as a way of helping to demonstrate our reach and influence. JC said that there were other ways other than just website visits that we could to demonstrate website traffic and usage [Craig would know this], and AW said that insight gathered such as data and numbers, and

how we may influence at meetings etc. were very different, but both important in capturing this information.

7. Trustee appraisals

LA said that all trustee appraisals had been completed and that these highlighted an interest from trustees to be more involved in some of the work that AG and the team undertake, as well as opportunities to shadow and/or attend some of the strategic meetings that AG attends. AG said that he would explore this with trustees.

8. Trustee skills audit & recruitment

LA briefly talked over the skills audit paper and said that whilst we had a good mix of skills and experience within our trustee group, we didn't necessarily have a broad diversity of backgrounds, such as people with a disability, ethnicity, LGBTQ etc. which we should try to proactively seek. LA said that it would be good to have a retired GP, dentist, pharmacist etc, and representation for Craven and coastal areas.

LA said that we should all [trustees & staff] try to identify possible new trustees. AG said that he had spoken with Rose who was a Senior Lecturer at York University, who had been identified by Amy Barnes, our previous trustee, who was really interested in supporting our work and becoming a trustee, and who had an academic and NHS background.

9. Staff wellbeing

AG talked over the wellbeing paper that he had circulated and said that he was keen to support the team to ensure they had a good working environment which supported their wellbeing. AG said that frustratingly the Workplace Wellbeing Award run by North Yorkshire Council that he had applied for in December was under review, so he would contact the council to see how long this would be for. Then depending on this, look to develop a brief plan for how he could take this work forward.

There was an agreement from trustees for the recommendations in the paper, including an additional wellness day per year and unpaid leave (up to 5 days), but trustees said this should be monitored as it could adversely affect work being delivered with us having such a small team. AG agreed to monitor that and said that he didn't expect all staff to be taking this routinely.

Close

Next Board meeting: Monday 22nd July, office and online. 10am -1pm