

Board meeting minutes.  
Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024  
10am – 1pm  
Healthwatch office & online (Teams)

**Present:**

Pat Southgate (PS)	Acting Chairperson
Rose Havelock (RH)	Trustee
Alan Cunningham (AC)	Trustee
Alison Wood (AW)	Trustee
Kacie Hodgson (KH)	Trustee
Ashley Green (AG)	CEO

**Apologies:**

John Cunningham (JC)	Trustee
Laura Parker (LP)	Trustee
Alan Cram (AC*)	Trustee

**1. Welcome & apologies.**

PS welcomed everyone to the meeting & said that apologies had been received from John, Laura and Alan.

AG asked for nominations to seek the approval for Rose Havelock and Alan Cunningham as new trustees. PS nominated Alan and this was seconded by AW. PS nominated Rose and this was seconded by KH.

There were no confidential matters arising.

**2. Minutes & Action log – 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024 Board meeting**

PS and all those present agreed with and accepted the minutes from the Board meeting in April.

AG said that all the actions had been completed from the action log and briefly went over them. He agreed to speak with AC\* about establishing a fundraising group and to keep links with Derek Bodell (a previous trustee) who had agreed to help us with putting together a fundraising plan. AG said that developing a plan and increasing our income was a long-term aim over a number of years and required further discussions.

There was a request from RH, AW and AC for support with attendance at future Local Care Partnership meetings. AG agreed to organise a meeting to go over how the team can support trustees, and how trustees give feedback information and present our insight, reports etc.

RH said that she would benefit from having a greater understanding of the NHS and council structures, including who the named people were. AG said he would look to provide some details on this.

### **3. Update on current work and business plan**

AG briefly went over the Quarterly Board summary and highlighted some of the areas of work. He said that he was pleased to report that he had appointed Holly Joyce as the new Business & Projects Support Officer following interviews in the previous week, and that following satisfactory references she would start with us on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sept.

PS & AW said that involving the team as part of the interview process was a good idea and worked well, and both acknowledged that we had received high calibre candidates which was pleasing.

AG said that our Postnatal Care report had been released to stakeholders at the end of May and had only just been released to the public due to the calling of the general election. AG said that he had been interviewed by Greatest Hits Radio last week, and that Craig was working with other radio and media channels to seek other communication opportunities.

AG said that the report had already received a lot of publicity particularly from North Yorkshire Council who commission the health visiting service, who had questioned our report's findings [mothers feedback] and the tone of our language and descriptions. In response, AG said that he had met with both the council and Harrogate District Foundation Trust to discuss the report, and in response to concerns had tweaked the tone/language of the report's text without diluting any of the content or recommendations. AG said that had only received feedback on the recommendations from the NY Primary Care lead and would be re-contacting the trusts and council to ask for their feedback on our recommendations.

AG highlighted our recent Insight report (Dec 2023 – March 2024) which we had shared with key stakeholders which summarised the public feedback we had received over the four months. AG said that this public feedback came from our phone line, website, email and through events. This feedback focused on access to GP appointments, hospital appointments, mental health support or dentists.

AG said that our main project for this year was our farming piece of work which set out to understand why farmers don't always seek help and what the barriers are for this. A project plan and timeline had been produced and Alicia had begun to contact organisations that support farmers to involve them in the project and ask for their help with promoting the survey and engagement. AG said that a final report would be produced in March/April 2025.

AG said that the North Yorkshire Peoples Voice Network that we [Healthwatch North Yorkshire] chaired was meeting this week and was going well. The network brings engagement and

involvement leads together from across the health and social care including NHS acute Hospital Trusts, Tees Esk Wear Valley's NHS Trust, mental health, VCSE sector, Craven voluntary sector etc.

AG said that we continue to be partners in the council's 'preparing for inspection' working group which meets monthly and has been undertaking work reviews and planning across the adult social care system in readiness for their CQC inspection (no date as yet confirmed). We have shared public feedback that we have and contributed to work and discussions around public and user feedback. On the back of this work, AG said that we will be undertaking a piece of engagement to test how the public experience accessing their adult social care services, by viewing information online (NYC website), by phoning the council and by publicly visiting council offices/sites. This will be undertaken by our volunteers posing as 'mystery shoppers' to see how easy it is to access information, help and support.

#### **4. Impact reports**

AG briefly went over the two impact reports to show progress against our reports and recommendations. PS said that a lot of improvement had been made with this over the last year, which hadn't always been easy. AG said that the only real outstanding report and recommendations were from our rurality report, and AG said that he had chased this a number of times now with the Director of Nursing and Quality, York & North Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership, but had not received any feedback. AG said that he would seek alternate ways to get a response and escalate this if he didn't hear back in the next month.

#### **5. North Yorkshire Council development fund**

AG said that we had been successful with our applications to support an increase in our reach, awareness and volunteer development with our two projects being agreed by the council for a total of £50,000. This is a non-recurring pot of money to be spent over the next two financial years (money to be received this year).

AG said that these two projects would each involve employing a part-time person for 15 hours each to support our volunteer work, including establishing volunteer networks, and the expansion of our digital reach in targeted communities across the county. He said that he would be advertising the posts this week via Indeed and local community organisations, with the hope of new staff starting in Sept.

Some trustees said that it might be difficult to recruit posts for just 15 hours, which AG agreed with. He said that he had considered merging the two posts into one but felt that the skills and expertise needed for the roles were very different. AG agreed to keep trustees updated on this, and if need be, would need to consider different options, if the recruitment was a challenge.

## **6. Plans for volunteer support**

Helen and Alicia gave a presentation on our plans to provide future support to our volunteer network which included, for example how we develop a sustainable culture for volunteering, including the elements of:

- Review, understand where we are now and where we want to be.
- Recruit, what skills and task do we have/need.
- Retain, are we meeting each volunteers' motivations and aspirations.
- Reward, how do we ensure each volunteer is recognised, rewarded and feel valued.

There was also discussion on us trailing a new volunteer management system called Assemble, which had already involved volunteers and a working group had been set up to help with this, which included six volunteers. This would be monitored to see if it met our needs and particularly those of our volunteers.

## **7. Finance**

AG briefly went over the Q1 (April – June) summary of accounts and said that there was an underspend in the staffing costs as we hadn't been able to recruit for the Business & Project Support Officer role as quickly as we hoped, plus we had received an exemption of £5,000 [over the tax year] for our NIC contributions via the Government which applies to small businesses.

Alongside this, AG said that there had been an underspend in trustee costs, staff reimbursement, and our coms & marketing. AW said that it was important that we spent our marketing and comms budget, which AG agreed with, and said that the only reason this hadn't been spent was due to Craig's time and the impact of the General Election.

## **8. New policies**

AG said that three new policies had been developed to meet current HR and government legislation and which had been shared with Peninsula, our independent HR advisors, who had confirmed that that they met current legislation. AG said that the Flexible Working Policy had come from a paper submitted and agreed by the Trustee Board in April to offer increased support around staff wellbeing, of which flexible working was just one element.

RH and KH highlighted a couple of grammar errors in the menopause and andropause policy which AG said he would amend and re-read over to ensure no further errors.

All trustees present (including LP) agreed the new policies for 1) Flexible working, 2) Maternity & Paternity, and 3) Menopause & Andropause.

## **9. Trustee & staff development workshop**

All trustees agreed that due to new staff joining, plus allowing time for AC and RH to become more familiar with the trustee role, that we shouldn't meet immediately, but instead have our annual Christmas meal and then meet in Jan/Feb time for our 2025-26 planning workshop. AG said that

he planned to organise a rurality summit in November with Community First Yorkshire which he would invite trustees to.

**10. AOB**

AG asked if trustees would contact their newly elected (or re-elected) MPs to introduce themselves as a trustees of Healthwatch, share our annual report and request a meeting. AG said he would accompany trustees if they wanted him to. AG said that he had a template letter that could be used. All trustees present agreed to do this.

**Close**

Next Board meeting: Monday 21<sup>st</sup> October, office and online. 10am -1pm