

**Approved Minutes of the Board meeting held on 25 January 2023 at
Millbank Tower, London**

Chair:

Rob Behrens CBE, Ombudsman

Non-Executive members:

Sir Alex Allan KCB (via MS Teams)

Polly Curtis

Anne Davies

Linda Farrant

Dean Fathers

Balram Gidoomal CBE)

Anu Singh

Amerdeep Somal

In attendance:

Karl Banister, Director of Operations,
Legal, and Clinical

Rebecca Bishop (Interim Director, Human
Resources)

Rebecca Hilsenrath, Director of Strategy

Maria Mansfeld, Chief of Staff

Andrew Dawson, Governance Officer
(minutes)

Executive Members:

Amanda Amroliwala CBE, Chief Executive

Gill Kilpatrick, Chief Operating Officer

Observers

Roz Pederson, Assistant Director of
Finance (via MS Teams)

Claire McGivern, Finance Business
Partner (via MS Teams)

Apologies

Mick King

1. Chair's Introduction and Welcome

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members, attendees and observers to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair informed the Board that it was Becky Bishop's last Board meeting as she would shortly be leaving PHSO. Members thanked Becky for her contribution to the Board and her work for PHSO.
- 1.3 Anne Davies asked for Systemic Reviews to be added as an item of Any Other Business. This was agreed.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest relevant to matters on the agenda.
- 2.2 Dean Fathers informed the Board that he had recently accepted the role of Chair of the Quality, Safety and Risk Committee at VoyageCare, a provider of healthcare services to people with learning difficulties.

3. Internal Audit Procurement

- 3.1 The Board received a paper from the Chief of Staff, regarding the procurement of a new internal audit contract, by 1 April 2024
- 3.2 The Board **noted** the specification for procurement of a new internal audit contract and the proposed procurement approach and timeline.

4. Draft High Level Business Plan and Budget 2023-24

Business Plan

- 4.1 The Board received a paper from the interim Director of Human Resources and the Assistant Director of Transformation setting out the first draft of the business plan and budget for 2023/24 to seek the Boards view of priorities.
- 4.2 Whilst significant work had been undertaken, the Casework Programme was still being defined, and as such, the resource requirement and operational impact was not yet incorporated. This would be the focus of the work over the coming weeks, as well as the overall assessment of the capacity to deliver and to absorb change. These issues will be resolved in the final Business Plan and Budget, which will be presented to the March meeting.
- 4.3 Members raised the following points in discussion:
 - Whether the business plan would include the introduction of Statistical Process Control.
 - The business plan gave a strong message on equality, diversity and human rights.
 - On Value for Money, the organisation needed to capture the full breadth of its activities and impacts, including identifying proxies for added value.

- Members noted that demand would be a critical factor and that increased demand would impact on the more creative aspects of the business plan. However, the organisation had coped with rising demand throughout 2022-23 during a period when high numbers of new caseworkers had been deployed.
- How much consideration had been given to connectivity between activities? e.g., could the increase in outreach work result in increased complaint volumes?
- Members discussed whether the amount included in the budget for pay inflation would be adequate.
- Members noted that investing in increasing capacity may mean increasing reliance on inexperienced staff. They discussed the role of the Academy in supporting new staff.

4.4 Members commented that the draft budget was lacking context. Specifically it was framed around the 2023-24 business year but without the context of the current three-year strategy or the CSR settlement. It would also be helpful to include information about delivery of the 2022/23 investments, to enable the Board to understand the efficacy of investments. Gill Kilpatrick provided assurance to the Board as to how this would be addressed both in the final budget presented to the Board in March, and in reporting throughout the financial year.

4.5 The Board **noted** the draft budget and business plan.

5. Peer Review

5.1 The Board received a paper from the Director of Strategy including the final report of the Peer Review panel and the proposed response to the panel recommendations.

5.2 Members welcomed the publication of the Peer Review report.

5.3 Members noted that other Ombuds were using the report as a benchmark and asked whether it would be possible to develop a peer review standard. They noted that it would be for the International Ombudsman Institute to develop this.

- Members were very supportive of the need to develop the understanding of complainants' demographics and suggested that this should be taken forward as a priority.
- It was encouraging that the Panel had recognised the importance of Outreach work.
- Members questioned whether the current policy of publishing anonymised reports was a barrier to engagement. However, there were significant data protection and privacy implications to publishing de-anonymised reports.

5.4 The Board **noted** the Peer Review report and **approved** the proposed response to the Peer Review Recommendations.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Anne Davies said that it would be useful for the Board to be provided with details of upcoming systemic investigations.

6.2 The Director of Strategy gave brief details of current and planned systemic investigations and will provide a full list in due course.

Meeting ended 12:10