

Minutes of the Board Open Session meeting held at Citygate on 5 July 2023

Chair:

Rob Behrens CBE, Ombudsman

Non-Executive members:

Sir Alex Allan KCB
(Senior non-executive member)

John Ainsworth

Polly Curtis

Anne Davies

Dean Fathers

Michael Parsons

Anu Singh

Amerdeep Somal

Executive Members:

Amanda Amroliwala CBE, Chief Executive

Gill Kilpatrick, Chief Operating Officer

In attendance:

Karl Banister, Director of Operations,
Legal and Clinical

Rebecca Hilsenrath, Director of Strategy

Maria Mansfeld, Chief of Staff

Roz Pedersen, Assistant Director, Finance

Faridah Newman, Executive & Committee
Officer (minutes)

Apologies:

Paul Najsarek, Non-Executive Member

1. Introduction and Welcome

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair notified members and attendees of his intention to raise under Any Other Business a formal recognition of this being the Chief Executive Officer's final Board meeting ahead of her departure from PHSO later in July.
- 1.3 Polly Curtis arrived to the meeting apologising for her delay due to travel disruption.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 None declared.

3. Feedback from Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 3.1 Dean Fathers arrived to the meeting apologising for his delay due to travel disruption.
- 3.2 Michael Parsons provided a brief verbal update from the preceding Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting:
 - The National Audit Office (NAO) paid tribute to PHSO's Finance Team for producing accounts on the NAO's significantly earlier timetable this year without compromising quality.
 - The NAO offered formal apologies that they had failed to meet this level of service, which has led to a protracted comments period and ongoing pressures to PHSO colleagues who they noted have retained high standards of professionalism in this difficult context.
- 3.3 Michael Parsons summarised ARAC's unanimous decisions and recommendations to Board as below:
 - To not adjust for errors within the report on the basis that these are not significant;
 - That powers to make any final changes to the Letter of Representation be delegated to the Ombudsman, Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer;
 - That the Ombudsman's 2022-23 Annual Report and Accounts be approved for signature, subject to the considerations outlined above.
- 3.4 Gill Kilpatrick explained that as well as the Finance Team working long hours, we also invested in additional temporary resource to meet the earlier deadline. The benefit of an earlier timetable this year was meant to be the earlier release of the team's capacity to focus on other work, but due to a protracted NAO comments period this has not been possible. The impact to the team and how well they have worked under substantial pressure cannot be underestimated.
- 3.5 Gill Kilpatrick emphasised the intention to work with the NAO to move forward in a positive way, including bringing a Lessons Learned analysis to the

September ARAC meeting (moved forward from its usual November scheduling due to the unusual circumstances outlined above).

- 3.6 The Board formally noted their thanks and appreciation to Roz Pedersen and the PHSO Finance Team, asking Roz to relay this to colleagues on their behalf.

4. PHSO Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23

- 4.1 Members noted that - despite issues outlined in the previous item - PHSO remains on track to lay the report and accounts before Parliament on 19 July 2023.
- 4.2 Amanda Amroliwala explained that - due to issues outlined in the previous item - PHSO's timetable for making final edits to the Annual Report and Accounts has been squeezed.
- 4.3 Rob Behrens explained that the layout for the designed report is ready and awaiting images, which both he and Amanda Amroliwala are clear should reflect the diversity within the organisation.
- 4.4 The Board **agreed** unanimously the adoption of ARAC's recommendations outlined within item 3 i.e:
- To not adjust for errors within the report on the basis that these are not significant;
 - That powers to make any final changes to the Letter of Representation be delegated to the Ombudsman, Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer;
 - That the Ombudsman's 2022-23 Annual Report and Accounts be approved for signature, subject to the considerations outlined above.

5. Any Other Business

- 5.1 The Chair formally recognised today's Board meeting as Amanda Amroliwala's final as Chief Executive Officer at PHSO with a short speech and by sharing a gift and card on behalf of all members of the Board.
- 5.2 Amanda Amroliwala thanked the Chair for his kind words, noting that all the achievements he had listed as hers were due to the exemplary team at PHSO.
- 5.3 Members and attendees joined in sharing their appreciation and best wishes with Amanda Amroliwala ahead of her departure later in July.

6. Date of Next Meeting

- 6.1 Members noted that the next Board meeting will be held on 27 September 2023 at Citygate (Manchester).

[Meeting close: 11:00]