

Minutes of the 101st Council meeting of the Patient and Client Council held on 14th November at 10am via teams

Present:

Ms Ruth Sutherland (Chair)
Mr Stephen Mathews
Mr Alan Hanna
Mr Paul Douglas
Mr Paddy Farry
Mr Tom Irvine
Cllr Martin Reilly (Co-opted member)

In attendance

Ms Meadhbha Monaghan, Chief Executive
Ms Carol Collins, Head of Business Support
Ms Una McKernan, Head of Operations
Mr Peter Hutchinson, Senior Policy, Impact and Influence Manager
Ms Clare McGlone, Executive Assistant

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed all and advised there were compliance areas to review during the meeting but focus would be on the discussion paper (Paper 741).

2. Conflicts of interest

None noted.

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved.

4. Matters arising

Ms Collins advised the Assurance Framework would be updated for the next ARAC meeting. Ms Collins also advised that Council IT needs were on the agenda.

5. Chair update

The Chair was pleased with the NICON conference, the PCC were well represented on all platforms.

A lot of the Chair's time had been spent on Council recruitment and she had spent six days interviewing candidates. The Chair discussed implications around the timing of recruitment but the logistics of the Council induction would be discussed later in the meeting.

6. CEO update (Paper 740)

Ms Monaghan highlighted this was the first paper provided for her update and welcomed feedback from Council members. This paper was structured similar to the first CEO update.

Ms Monaghan provided a highlight of work over the last few months and an overview of meetings attended. Ms Monaghan attended the ALB CEO forum where they explored how to bring regional perspectives to the broader system and how to connect with Trusts. The Chair and Ms Monaghan attended a number of introductory meetings including with NISCC. Ms Monaghan also had an introductory meeting with Voiceability and had been asked to be part of an international meeting with other advocacy organisations. Ms Monaghan also met with Healthwatch England and explored similar themes identified.

The most recent staff day took place on 7th November 2023 which was led by Ms McKernan. Ms Monaghan provided an update to staff on work undertaken and meetings. Hybrid working was discussed and Ms Monaghan advised BSO were extending the hybrid working pilot. Staff feedback positively to hybrid working. Ms Monaghan added that this would also feed into the estates strategy which was an ongoing piece of work.

Ms Monaghan provided an overview of the NICON conference. The topic of this was embracing the public as an asset, which was live illustrated and included in paper 740. Ms Monaghan recognised that at NICON they were speaking to those who work in system and wanted to build on this as part of the annual event.

The Chair thanked Ms Monaghan, there was a lot of work as well as external networking. Mr Mathews thanked the Chair and CEO and agreed the graphic was a great way to visualise key points. Mr Mathews queried if PCC's MDAG

participation was a standing position. Ms Monaghan confirmed this was a standing attendance but that the PCC's role in relation to MDAG changed.

7. Strategic Discussion (Paper 741)

The Chair wanted to look at how the Council plan and manage their work and harmonise schedules of council, committee meetings and workshops. The Chair wanted to make the best use of skills and experience of council members. The Chair and EMT held a workshop in October and produced a paper. Ms Monaghan advised this paper was produced to capture the essence of the discussion with questions to prompt further discussion. There were five key areas where Ms Monaghan sought Council input.

Mr Hanna was happy with the proposal to reduce formal Council meetings and maintain the number of workshops but as PCC was a public board, to reduce the number of meetings would need to be considered by Council in order to maximise opportunities for the public to attend and engage with Council. The Chair agreed and it was important to manage communications to ensure public were aware they could attend council meetings. Mr Irvine reflected similar concerns and echoes what Mr Hanna said. Mr Irvine and Council members' responsibility was to ensure the PCC had robust financial and governance in place. Mr Irvine highlighted difficulty scrutinising papers with four meetings per year. The Chair reflected that this was more about balance of Council time and the proposal would mean 10 Council meetings per year including workshops. Mr Farry agreed with Mr Irvine's concerns around the number of documents coming to sub-committees and queried the terminology used to describe the workshop, highlighting that 'strategic discussion' implied a formal council meeting therefore proposed that the terminology of 'workshops' was retained. The Chair agreed this was a good point. Mr Douglas agreed, and sitting on Business Committee and previously ARAC, didn't have an issue reducing the number of meetings as it was important to remain strategic. Mr Mathews highlighted the importance of aligning meetings and shared concerns regarding papers containing a detailed amount of operational information but added the sense of openness is refreshing.

The Chair agreed with the comments on the paper and advised that Council could ask for more information from EMT if required. Mr Irvine agreed following discussion with the proposal to reduce to four formal meetings as committees were robust. Mr Irvine also thanked Ms Collins and the team for getting the papers out and was happy with majority decision. Council members approved the approach. The Chair added this could be reviewed.

Ms Monaghan provided an overview of the second part of the paper. Ms Monaghan agreed that Council should consider this and review in 6 months or 1 year to ensure it was effective and governance requirements were met. Ms Monaghan provided an overview of the themes proposed for upcoming workshops and current dates of council meetings and workshops. Ms Monaghan drew attention to the draft induction schedule contained in paper 741 and wanted to keep a balance of new members induction and their capacity to engage.

Ms Monaghan asked if the ARAC Chair was comfortable if reporting of the ARAC meeting of February could be brought to Council in May. Mr Farry agreed with this. Ms Monaghan asked if members were content for the change to be made to the dates and with the suggested themes. Members were content with these.

8. Business support and Governance

Register of Sealing (Paper 742)

Ms Collins advised that PCC were required to keep a register and this had been updated in line with being used for the lease in Ballymena. Council members approved this.

9. IT solutions (Verbal update)

Ms Collins was exploring options for Council IT equipment but these were limited. Ms Collins would update members at the next workshop in December 2023. The Chair advised that she could provide Ms Collins a contact in another HSC organisation and suggested speaking to the HSC Leadership centre as they may have a solution.

ACTION: Ms Collins to speak to HSC leadership centre about IT solutions for council and provide an update at the Council workshop in December.

10. Risk (Paper 743)

Ms Collins highlighted that Mr Farry (ARAC Chair) recommended that risk was seen by Council. Mr Farry added that this was to give Council a high level view. Ms Collins proposed having risk on every agenda, providing a brief overview of the top three risks and one workshop per year would be a full review of the Risk Register. The Chair suggested that appendix one of paper 743 would be suffice for each meeting, and in terms of a deep dive this may be a committee role or Council could take one risk and carry out a deep dive. Mr Mathews agreed with presenting the summary report particularly as it was important to review the change in status. Ms Collins advised whilst information governance risk hadn't increased, there were a few recommendations that hadn't moved and the risk had increased due to the ICO reprimand and data breach. Ms Collins assured Council that PCC looked into information Governance regularly. Mr Farry advised that ARAC had taken guidance from Ms Mitchell (HSC Leadership Centre) on the level of deep dive required and it was Internal audit who carried out deep dives.

The Chair was looking at the content and queried if reputational risk was covered given previous discussions around awareness. Ms Collins agreed and the Corporate Risk register was work in progress, PCC would increase controls around this risk. Mr Irvine suggested that the risk around Council size could be reduced with new members due to start. Mr Farry agreed and Ms Collins could update this for the next ARAC.

ACTION: Ms Collins to amend the risk register for the next ARAC meeting.

11. Equality and disability action plan (Paper 744)

Ms Collins advised that this was presented to Council in February 2023 as draft, It then went to public consultation and the recommended changes were made. PCC wanted to keep this as a live document and were looking at how to embed this in the operational plan. Council members discussed and approved this.

12. Partnership agreement (Paper 745)

Ms Collins highlighted that Council had sight of this document before. The Chair thanked the team for the work and it reflected the strong relationship with Sponsor Branch. Council members agreed signing of the Partnership Agreement.

13. Finance update (Paper 746)

Ms Collins advised since finances in month 6, the RRL remained the same. Ms Collins drew attention to the underspend of £83k and provided a breakdown. This was associated with delays in recruitment and legal spend hadn't been in-line with what was forecast. A spend plan was in place and work was progressing around records managements, training and communications plan. Ms Collins noted that while a retraction was being made against inquiry related funds, PCC would be cautious in doing so as provisions needed to be made for work later in the year that was out of PCC's control. Ms Collins spoke to Sponsor Branch regarding making provisions for legal spend in quarter four. The Chair agreed with this approach. Ms Collins added it was important to note, this was a non recurrent retraction from the inquiry budget.

Mr Douglas commented it was good news regarding the budget and highlighted that the risk around the budget should be amended to reflect it was being managed well. Mr Hanna informed Council members that this was discussed at Business Committee, and were assured the Inquiry budget was the issue. They were also reassured that this was being handled as well as possible.

Action: Risk around budget to be amended.

14. Operational Performance

Mr Hutchinson noted council approved the Quality report via correspondence and this was now published. Mr Hutchinson shared the presentation with Council members and highlighted this would cover the papers presented to Business Committee.

Mr Hutchinson provided an overview of the performance report and key areas of concern relating to advocacy report. Mr Hutchinson provided an overview of

areas where PCC needed to focus on. Outputs 12 to 15 had been discussed with Business Committee and had sought to stand these outputs down, PCC had also discussed this with Sponsor Branch. These would remain in the operational plan but PCC were not trying to achieve the targets set by year end so would not report against them in forthcoming quarters.

Mr Hutchinson highlighted the areas of concerns and background to these. PCC were currently developing a plan and had carried out activities to raise awareness of specific services provided. Mr Hutchinson was looking into testing the awareness of PCC in Northern Ireland and hoped this would be launched in January 2024. PCC would also be seeking to deliver material across the HSC and promote through regional literature and magazines. Regarding PCC membership, Ms Monaghan advised that they had been developing thinking of PCC's role in certain HSC groups and forums. Ms Monaghan provided an overview of engagement including Cervical screening and support PCC could provide while the review was ongoing.

The Chair thanked Mr Hutchinson and asked members to contact Mr Hutchinson if they had any comments or queries.

15. ARAC Committee

Mr Farry advised that all papers included had been through ARAC in October 2023 and Internal Audit were on track to deliver all reports and external audit were present as well. Mr Farry took the documents as read and was seeking approval from Council. The Report to Those charged with Governance (RTTCWG) (Paper 749) contained two minor amendments since last presented including the composition of the Council and the lease of Ballymena which was now resolved.

Council approved papers 747, 748, 749 and 750. Mr Irvine highlighted that the key point was the unqualified opinion received and PCC should be proud of this.

16. Business committee

Mr Hanna advised that papers were covered under Mr Hutchinson's presentation and Business committee had covered these papers in detail during the committee on 31st October 2023. Business Committee had also discussed finance, issues around the underspend and the inquiry. Other areas covered were information requests and complaints, HR summary, Information Governance action plan progress and property asset management plan which was submitted to DOH.

The Chair suggested that as there would be more members on Council, if papers could be sent out earlier she would encourage people to contact chairs of committees ahead of meetings to cover any points or queries.

17.AOB

The next meeting was scheduled for 13th February 2024 and it was hoped this would be in person. The Chair thanked all attendees and advised that if there was any news regarding the appointments, Council members would be advised.

Meeting closed at 12.54pm.

Signed:

Ruth Sutcliffe

Date: 13th February 2024