County Board

Thursday 2nd April 2009
2.00pm – 4.30pm
Octagon Annex,
Octagon Building, Beaconside Campus,
Staffordshire University.

MINUTES

County Board Members Present:

Michael Creek (Chair)
Michael Wall
Cyril Burton
John Titlow
Dennis Firmstone
Carl Bennett
Anne Glen
Harry Ferguson
Jo Chapman
Richard Wingrove

Support from Host:

Linda Seru, Host Director.
Sue Baknak, Host Coordinator.

Public Gallery:
Julie Thompson-Edwards
Frank James
Simon Foster
Margaret Coley
Robin Bastin

Item	Discussion
1. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising	Comments regarding inaccuracy/omissions from previous minutes. ***Linda do you have any notes on this as I was out of the room photocopying for Michael.*** a) Register of interest – could members please ensure these are completed and returned to the Host. b) Item 1.12 – agenda item. c) Item 2 – MW/LS to undertake that liaison and set a date. d) Item 3.3.1 – it was proposed that the Board should adopt the protocol that members can sit on one district committee only with one vote and that this be reflected in the governance protocols.

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	Decision(s)		**Action**

e) Item 3.3.1 – member concerned has stepped down so now only on one district committee but the Board has not agreed the position. Discussion from members that it should be agreed and the governance sub-group look at this following feedback from the elections. Board should adopt the fact that members can sit on one district committee only with one vote. One member felt it had been important to populate the district committees in the early stages and offer expertise. Others agreed but felt now it was not necessary. One member commented that members must be mindful that this isn't an attempt at retaining power or kudos and recommended that if expertise is required co-option of that expertise for a particular project and length of time is more appropriate. A member commented that there had been no evidence of that issue here. One member stated that he had always been of the view that it was one district committee, one vote to avoid 'leap frogging' between the committees and causing complications. The member suggested that if there is a particular issue, members should draw it to the attention of the relevant committee to address or refer it to the Board if it is a county-wide issue and confirmed that this is how his district committee was operating. MC asked for a vote. One member commented that he agreed and if members had any queries they could be given the rules and the feedback from the Board. One member asked for clarification as she was confused by this statement. The member concerned explained again. MC asked for the vote. The motion was seconded and 9 votes were cast in favour of 1 district committee, 1 vote and there was 1 member who abstained. The vote was carried and this is to be reflected in the governance protocols.

One member commented that he had chaired his AGM which had gone very well and having received good publicity, had generated good discussions and been successful in recruiting 2 new members.

d) Item 3.31 – agenda item.

e) Item 3.4 – Board needs to decide on the representatives to sit on the Stoke LINk and other LINks if requested to do that in the future. MC confirmed this will be an agenda item at the AGM.

f) Items 9 – agenda items 8 and 9.

g) Item 10 – MC asked Chairs of the sub-groups to meet as soon as possible and revisit the summary of action points taken from the feedback reports in order to revise to a realistic timescale and take action accordingly in order to feedback to the Board. MC asked for the Terms of Reference to be revisited and agreed subject to possible need for alteration but advised he would come back to this item later.

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h) Item 10 – agree schedule of 12 month dates so that they can be published on the website – MC advised this would be done at the AGM. MC suggested the last Friday in May for the AGM and the last Friday in each month for subsequent meetings thereafter and advised there is no meeting in December. LS advised that she does not work on Fridays so would be unable to attend. LS also advised that Fridays would be difficult for some faiths to attend. A discussion followed regarding the suggestion of a Friday and hadn't a matrix of availability been prepared by the Host. SB confirmed a matrix had been produced and shared with the previous Chair and Vice Chair but no common availability amongst members could be identified. Members agreed that whichever date is chosen there will be some who can't attend. One member proposed that the Host arrange the dates and this was seconded and agreed by the Board.

MC – sub-groups came up with ToRs and schedule of items with a timetable some of which have been missed. MC asked Chairs to take them back and look at them again. MC suggested that current members of the sub-groups (including those who may have retired could continue until the AGM when the composition of the groups will be looked at again when nominations have been made for representation from the district committees.

2. **Indemnity Insurance**

Host has now been able to secure indemnity insurance with very comprehensive cover for all members which will cost £2,300 plus VAT per annum. The cover comes with the proviso that the LINk can demonstrate its risk management provision in the form of adequate governance procedures, training and induction for its members. This also includes CRB checks. Question asked if recent CRB checks were transferable as this would avoid incurring the cost of a new CRB check. LS advised they could not and this was reaffirmed by another member. A query was raised that if members do not follow the protocols to the letter are they liable. LS confirmed yes and that this provision was normal with the likelihood that cover would be withdrawn. The suggestion was made that this could come under the remit of the Finance and Audit sub-group. Comments were made that guidelines were required and that each member should receive a copy of the insurance cover and policy documentation. Members congratulated the host on securing insurance and thanked them for the hard work done in achieving this. One member proposed that the Board approve this proposal which was seconded and the Board agreed. MC advised that this should form part of the induction programme for members.

3. **Constitution**

MC asked the Board to move the AGM from April to May as not all the reports will be available in April to hold the AGM on this occasion. It was proposed that the governance sub-group could look at this for future meetings as it needs to be considered alongside the university's timeframe for production of annual accounts. MC asked for a decision from the Board. The Board agreed to move the AGM to May 2009.

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4. **Stafford Hospital**

MC advised that a member had asked for this to be an agenda item in order to discuss how the LINk is going to deal with this issue. The member advised that a further enquiry is going ahead so until the outcome of that report is known the LINk should wait before getting involved. The member had attended a meeting at SSPCT Board and they are already having discussions with the management board at the hospital and waiting for the outcome of any further investigations. The member suggested that as this issue covers the whole of the Staffordshire area, the Board recommend that the LINk wait until further reports are received and these can inform the discussion and the way forward. The LINk needs to consider whether this was a 'blip' in service provision or whether it was so out of the ordinary that it needs further consideration. Members discussed when the reports would be available but this information was unknown. A member suggested that the whole Board should attend any meetings. MW declared that he cannot contribute to the discussion as he was a former member of the Mid-Staffs Board. LS advised that other LINks are already debating the report as they are recognising it as systematic failure and the PCT are also linked as they had been commissioning the services; that the focus needs to be about lessons learned. Members wanted to be clear that this wasn't just about Stafford but about the whole of the patch across the Staffordshire LINk. Members commented that there was national and local interest in Staffordshire and one was concerned that we don't rush into things but do nothing at the moment until the LINk has had the opportunity to examine the emerging evidence in depth before commenting as a Board. Discussion followed that there will be a mass of information and someone needs to research it for the LINk perhaps 2/3 people but the LINk does need to respond but not now. Members agreed as not all the information is available yet. Members asked if contact should be made with the hospital/PCT as they felt the LINk should be seen to be looking into it and taking an interest. One member who had previously been on the PPIF commented that he had been asked what the PPIF had been doing for 5 years and confirmed that they had not been able to get into the hospital so they need to know that the LINk is here. One member raised concerns that the communication was going via the Host and not directly to the Board. LS confirmed that the only communication had been a meeting with Helen Moss as previously advised and that the report of that meeting had been distributed at the last County Board meeting. LS also confirmed that she had never met Jill Davies before the Stafford DC AGM. AG stated that she felt the communication should be via the Board. LS confirmed that Helen Moss had been receptive and offered the opportunity to meet with the LINk and Jill Davies had given similar offers about the working collaboratively with the LINk. DF felt there was a perception that the LINk is a small group who should be kept at arm's length. RW suggested that the LINk provide a statement. AG stated that she felt the communication should be via the Board. LS confirmed that Helen Moss had been receptive and offered the opportunity to meet with the LINk and Jill Davies had given similar offers about the working collaboratively with the LINk. DF felt there was a perception that the LINk is a small group who should be kept at arm's length. RW suggested that the LINk provide a statement. JC commented that there had been an item on the news that there was not going to be an independent enquiry as it could impede progress. AG asked if anyone had offered support to Cure the NHS and Julie

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Bailey. MC explained that there had been offers to meet and JB offered to meet and share a copy of their report but she didn't proceed. HF stated the need to look at the care of the patients. JT commented there are two concerns i) the quality of care and ii) what are people doing about it. CBennett advised he had given evidence to the Healthcare Commission regarding his care and what he found and the report from the Healthcare Commission does not refer to the whole of the hospital that has problems it was certain parts of the hospital that had problems and those are being addressed by six internal teams and at that stage there is the opportunity to get involved but prior to that we have the Healthcare Commission report synopsis which could form the basis of discussions within the County Board as the first stage to agree a way forward and discuss again when further reports come out. CBennett proposed that as a way forward; the synopsis of the report to inform the basis of the discussions by a sub-group or the County Board. AG referred to pages 11/12. DF advised he had been treated very well and sent a thank you letter to the nursing staff. AG stated that whatever comes out of this will help all the districts. MC summised that from the discussions around the table the County Board would like to set up either a sub-group or the County Board to discuss this issue. DF agreed with CBennett's proposal to set up a sub-group to look into it and report to the Board. CBurton queried if there was a Board of Governors at the Trust and do they want the LINk on it. AG stated they don't have a choice. CBurton cautioned to be careful not to destroy the good things in the process. CBennett advised that it is not about being destructive but rather establishing a process in order to follow this issue through. CBennett proposed establishing a sub-group and calling a special meeting to look at this issue and discuss next steps. DF seconded and the Board agreed. MC advised that at least some of the members of that sub-group should read the whole of the Healthcare Commission report. HF suggested that there should be representation on the sub-group from outside the Stafford and Cannock areas as well. AG stated that it should include representatives from all 5 District Committees that are currently established. MC advised that a Board member should lead the group and then be populated from the District Committees. MC asked if there was anything else regarding Stafford hospital today. MC advised that the LINk has an opportunity to meet in the future with staff/Board members of the hospital and that hasn't been progressed yet. AG stated we need to. The Chair of the sub-group should be pro-active and do that. CBennett advised that the staff at the hospital are totally demoralised and the LINk should contact the Trade Unions to understand what they are going through. AG asked if a Chair of the sub-group could be elected and proposed CBennett. DF seconded. Board members agreed. LS asked if the sub-group would be looking just at Stafford Hospital. MC advised that the sub-group needs to include PCTs and others who are involved. RW advised it would also involve South Staffs PCT and North Staffs PCT. MC confirmed that the commissioning of services from Stafford Hospital would beend to be part of the discussions in the sub-group.

5. **Host Staffing**

MC advised that he had asked the Host to produce a template for staffing proposal for discussion by the General Purposes and Finance sub-group which the Host did but the group did not reach a consensus on what could happen; we consistently hear that

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things are not happening. Staffordshire LINk has the equivalent of 2 full time staff for the whole of the county; with the hub and spoke/District Committee/sub-group structure, this is totally unrealistic. MC advised that the Finance and Audit sub-group had not reached a decision previously either. MC confirmed this needs to be addressed and felt that the LINk would not get very far until the template is seriously considered. MC advised that the template needs to go back to the General Purposes and Finance sub-group before the next Board meeting to clarify the staffing level needed and put forward a recommendation to the Board. MC recommended that there are a number of staff appointed as a start including one for the north of the county and one for the south of the county to work with and support the Districts. MC advised that the template proposed 3 of these suggested posts but MC recommended 2 posts at a salary of c£18,000. MC advised he had spoken to Matt Snowden at the University who had indicated that with on costs this figure would be c£25,000. MC also suggested that there needs to be additional clerical support with a salary in the region of £12/13,000. MC advised that there are no job descriptions yet. CBennett stated that at the beginning of the LINk each district committee would be responsible for their own admin, agendas, minutes, etc. and in Cannock Chase this is what they would like to do. CBennett advised that Cannock Chase is doing very well and asked the County Board to approve the appointment of a lay admin person on 2/3 hours a month to do the admin work of the Cannock Chase District Committee until things are established otherwise CBennett produces the papers and sends them to the Host to type up and send out which is crazy. AG commented that she had done a lot of reading/research and how advanced Cannock Chase was and had no objection to the proposal but also felt there was some merit in MC's recommendation. AG stated that previously an honorarium had been discussed for the lay person doing this work and asked from whose budget this would come as the district committees do not have a devolved budget. AG confirmed that the districts are moving forward and that she takes some of the credit for that as a member of the County Board and advised that she had met with Julie Thompson-Edwards for an hour regarding the funding for the LINk and believed that the funding for these pots/honorariums should come out of the host's budget as the districts need their budget to do the work on the ground. MC confirmed that there is money available in the budgets and that unspent money from year 1 would be taken forward to year 2. AG stated that we need to be sure where we are going and where the money is coming from. LS advised that the district committees or the Board could not employ anyone and any new staff would be employed by the University. LS agreed with AG that further discussions in respect of strategic objectives were required as this would help inform the staffing structure and needed to be done in collaboration with the host otherwise it will not work. LS advised that there are several options for support to be considered eg. interns, agency staff, etc. and would like to work with a small group of members to progress this issue. AG asked who is going to pay for it. LS advised that there was an underspend on staff salaries in year 1 and an underspend on the LINk budget in year 1 and an unallocated budget. LS confirmed that an honorarium for admin support is different to employing host staff but would take some time to implement so need to plug the gap in the meantime. DF advised that realistically Cannock Chase needs £100 per month to do the job. CBennett advised that he had looked at this closely, knows the job knows that they would like the admin

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person to and have identified a capable person to do it. CBennett confirmed that Cannock Chase district committee requires £100 per month in order to move forward and it can be reviewed in the future. If this cannot be agreed by the Board today, CBennett advised that he cannot continue as he has been doing. RW advised that in regard to the proposal to appoint 3 members of staff as recommended by MC, he would like to second that at the moment as a way forward and to get the activities moving. HF gave his apologies and left the meeting. CBurton asked how are these 3 new posts going to alleviate the work pressures of the Director? LS advised it was quite difficulty to quantify at the moment as job descriptions had not been produced yet but advised that at the General Purposes and Finance sub-group members felt that the LINk needed more support on the ground and this would generate more work for everyone and bring back information to the district committees to help inform the workplan. LS advised that this is the gap at the moment because LS/SB do not have the capacity to provide this support. LS advised that as part of her role she should be out working with the commissioners and forming the bridges between them and the LINk/host. CBurton clarified that it would alleviate some of the pressures but would also create more work. LS confirmed but also advised that discussions had not taken place in respect of what the Board wants from the Host and as a LINk. AG stood up and stated the proposal from LS but this was keeping control and not allowing the district committees to get on with the work. AG read from a letter from Anne Hurst and then commented that there are 3 district committees yet to be established and developed and that the host should be focusing on that. AG stated that the host is a broker for the local authority and we haven't seen a budget yet and need it to be devolved down to the district committees and Julie Thompson-Edwards to oversee the contract. AG stated the fundamentals are to take control as a County Board and take control at grass roots level. JT raised 2 issues i) what are we doing at district committees; and ii) we need additional support at the centre; so can we have agreement on more clerical support at the centre. MC advised that there is no consensus from the original template so need to look at it again with a timeframe attached. LS advised that the decision on staffing will be made by the University based on the recommendations it receives from the County Board. CBennett reiterated his need for a decision on the honorarium paid to a lay person from the County Board. MC asked LS if a petty cash/imprest account system could be implemented from the University. LS advised that there would be systems/protocols to be followed and would need to make enquiries of the University to establish if this was possible. DF asked if it could go through the Finance and Audit, or General Purposes sub-group. LS advised that this replaces one problem with another. LS advised that the hourly rate/amount needs to be the same across all 8 districts. JC asked if the new posts recommended would take on this role. MC advised it is highly unlikely. JC felt there no option then. AG stated that it was the hosts role to facilitate the LINk and the provision should come from the host. DF asked if a rate could be agreed. MW/LS advised that a lump sum should be considered. MW suggested up to £500 per year as an honorarium plus expenses. MC ask if the Board were moving forward on host staffing. JC advised it would be help if there were job descriptions to consider. CBennett advised he was happy with the honorarium decision. JC stated that the host staff will be burnt out and leave and we don't want that. LS asked the Board if they

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wanted a petty cash system that comes with relevant protocols and processes. Board voted in favour. AG advised that this should go to the finance sub-group to allocate the budget.

6. **District Committee Activities**
MC advised that each district committee should provide a report of their activities to be included in the LINk annual report. LS advised that the report needs to be in writing and submitted to the host by mid-April in order that it can be incorporated into a county-wide report for consideration by the County Board at its AGM. LS advised she could meet with district committee chairs to help with this if they required assistance. CBennett asked if he could meet with LS next week. AG advised she was on leave but would check with MR and come back to LS. A template needs to be sent out with a request for completion by mid-April.

7. **Feedback reports for information**
MC advised that reports had been distributed for information. JC asked if MRiley was still a member of LINk. MC confirmed that MRiley was now a member of the East Staffordshire District Committee. JC asked if MRiley could provide a more comprehensive report in respect of her attendance at ???? for the next County Board meeting.

8. **Date for AGM**
LS asked if the Board had any suggestions for the format of the AGM to make it interesting in order to attract members of the public to attend or if they wanted the usual boring meeting format. MW suggested a film or something eg. green paper on care with accompanying DVD. AG commented that Dignity in care is at the heart of the LINk's remit. LS asked for agreement on the structure of the AGM eg. presenting accounts, annual report, election of Chair, Vice Chair etc. LS advised that this detail could be discussed with MC, outside of the meeting if the Board agreed. Board agreed to this. LS asked if the Board had any thoughts on the time for the AGM eg. weekend, evening. AG and JC said no to the weekend. MC stated that evening meetings not well populated and asked if a day time meeting would attract less people. AG stated not to make a big thing of the AGM but to fix the date and time and the host to advertise. The Board agreed Tuesday 26th May 2009 at 2.00pm – 4.30pm.

9. **12 month schedule of dates for County Board**
MC suggested the last Tuesday of every month in the afternoon. AG emphasised the need for consistent representation by 2 members of each district committee to enable speedier progress in board meetings. The Board agreed to meet on the last Tuesday of every month at 2.00pm.

10. **AOB**
LS advised that a request had been received from South Staffordshire PCT for a representative on a cardio/stroke LIT advisory group which will be meeting on 19th May from 2.00pm – 4.00pm. CBennett proposed DF and AG seconded. The Board approved.

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SB advised that information several promotion/advertising opportunities had been received by the host and asked the Board if she could pass them on to RW in his capacity as Chair of the Communications sub-group for them to discuss at their next meeting. The Board approved.
SB distributed a report which HN had provided in respect of her attendance at the recent PEAT inspections at North Staffs Combined Healthcare NHS Trust for information.
DF advised he wished to join some of the sub-groups. MC advised that nominations should be dealt with at district committee meetings.

Meeting closed.

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