



COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

**Minutes of the meeting of the Council of Governors held in public
on Thursday 6 February 2025 at 15:00
via Microsoft Teams**

Chair	Suzy Brain-England OBE, Chair of the Board	
Public Governors	Irfan Ahmed Debbie Benson Mark Bright Andrew Flynn David Gregory Lynne Logan Crystal Lucas Phil Mettam David Northwood Colin Wallace Sheila Walsh	
Staff Governors	Kay Brown Joseph Money Vivek Panikkar Gavin Portier Mandy Tyrrell	
Partner Governors	Phil Holmes Alexis Johnson	
In attendance	Rebecca Allen - Associate Director of Strategy, Partnerships & Governance Hazel Brand - Non-executive Director Marjie Cameron - Corporate Administrator (minutes) Jo Gander - Non-executive Director Emyr Jones - Non-executive Director Lucy Nickson - Non-executive Director Richard Parker OBE - Chief Executive Emma Shaheen - Director of Communications and Engagement Anneleisse Siddall - Corporate Governance Officer Kath Smart - Non-executive Director	
Governor Apologies:	Jackie Hammerton	
Board Member Apologies	Mark Bailey - Non-executive Director Zara Jones - Deputy Chief Executive	

		<u>ACTION</u>
COG25/02/A1	Welcome, apologies for absence (Verbal)	
	<p>The Chair welcomed the Council of Governors and those in attendance to the meeting, including Bassetlaw Public Governor, Crystal Lucas who had taken up a recently vacated seat following a governor resignation.</p> <p>The above apologies for absence were noted.</p>	
COG25/02/A2	<u>Declaration of Governors' Interests (Enclosure A2)</u>	
	No new declarations of interests were presented to the meeting.	
	<p><i>The Council:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Noted governors' current declarations of interests.</i> 	
COG25/02/A3	<u>Actions from previous meetings</u>	
	There were no actions from the previous meeting.	
COG25/02/B1	<u>Extension of Governors Term</u>	
	<p>The Associate Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Governance highlighted a number of governors' terms of office ended this year in April. This did not align with the usual September cycle and in order to avoid repetition of the issue and avoid additional election costs the paper proposed a solution for consideration by the Council of Governors.</p> <p>Seven of the eight governors affected were eligible to stand for re-election and whilst the Trust was unable to extend the term of an elected governor beyond three years, it could co-opt the governors in accordance with the Trust's Constitution. The affected governors had been consulted and three staff governors and one public governor were agreeable to continue until the elections were undertaken later in the year. The remaining three governors did not currently engage with the Council and would stand down at the end of their terms of office.</p> <p>The Chair noted the significant financial costs of the election process and sought agreement from the Council of the proposed way forward.</p> <p>Public Governor, David Northwood suggested he may also be eligible to extend his term of office beyond the April date, until July 2025 when he would have served the maximum term of office. The Associate Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Governance clarified that the Trust's Constitution limited the maximum term to nine years.</p> <p>Public Governor, Mark Bright enquired if the proposal applied only to the upcoming election cycle, the Chair confirmed this was correct, the proposal would return the election cycle of elections to an annual basis.</p> <p>The Chair sought the Council of Governors support of the proposal.</p>	

	<p><i>The Council of Governors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Supported the proposal to extend the relevant terms of office and move to an annual September cycle of elections.</i> 	
COG25/02/B2	<u>Update on Membership Management</u>	
	<p>The Associate Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Governance reflected on recent Council of Governors' discussions related to the need to improve engagement with the Trust's members. One method suggested was the use of electronic communication, an approach adopted by many trusts. The Trust's membership database was made up of a significant number of longstanding members, secured at the time of applying for foundation trust status. Communication with members was largely dependent upon postal services, rather than email.</p> <p>The size of the Trust's membership, interactions and associated costs had been considered by the Board of Directors, including how best to maintain the database, which was currently administered in house. The Board supported a move to electronic communication, with a focus on increasing membership engagement, rather than focusing on membership numbers.</p> <p>Online applications would continue and governors would be able to sign up interested members from the communities served and at governor events. The Trust Board Office would source the necessary equipment to facilitate this.</p> <p>The Council of Governors supported the outlined approach.</p>	
	<p><i>The Council of Governors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Noted the update on Membership Management and supported the approach.</i> 	
COG25/02/C1	<u>Presentation</u>	
COG25/02/C1.1	<p><u>Chair's Report</u></p> <p>The Chair shared her delight at being able to join colleagues to recognise and celebrate their service to the NHS. A very special afternoon tea to say thank you for years of dedicated and loyal service had taken place and service of between 10 and 50 years was recognised, which was truly inspirational.</p> <p>Governors were informed of significant work ongoing as part of the annual planning process which focused on the Trust's complex plans to deliver operational, financial and workforce challenges in the year ahead.</p>	
COG25/02/C1.2	<p><u>Richard Parker OBE, Chief Executive's Report</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive recognised the incredibly busy start to winter, due to the increased prevalence of COVID-19, respiratory syncytial virus in children, norovirus, and influenza.</p> <p>Whilst the national 4-hour standard in the Emergency Department had not been met, the Trust's performance continued to be in the upper quartile. Maintaining patient flow was crucial due to a low inpatient bed base per population. 12-hour waits and ambulance handover performance had improved, compared to last year, despite increased attendances. The improvement was in part due to the success of virtual wards, with an average of 90 patients being supported daily in their homes. Currently, most virtual ward</p>	

	<p>patients were those discharged from the hospital into the community, with virtual support. Moving forwards, there would be a focus on avoiding hospital admissions through the use of virtual wards.</p> <p>Place based work had been crucial this winter, with a focus on support for patients who were fit for discharge but required support at home, or in a care environment. Historically, the Trust had experienced a high number of medically fit patients unable to be discharged; last year's average being 160, which was extremely challenging to manage with a limited bed base.</p> <p>Activity levels during November 2024 to January 2025 were compared to the previous year, the volume of inpatient care had decreased, whilst outpatient and emergency care had risen. Maternity numbers had reduced but were noted to fluctuate due to socio-economic factors. The Trust had seen some of the highest bed occupancy in the region, with occupancy above the national standard of 92% for the last five years.</p> <p>Karin Smyth, the Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care) had visited the Trust, Estates colleagues and the former Chief Financial Officer had facilitated a tour of the site, highlighting the challenged estate and the need for capital funding to address the critical maintenance backlog. The backlog remained high despite work undertaken on utilities and infrastructure, and stood at £116 million.</p> <p>The Chief Executive brought the governors attention to nationally funded developments at the Doncaster site, including the construction of a new critical care unit at the rear of the site. The facility was expected to open in early 2027.</p> <p>Construction had begun on a state-of-the-art robotic rehabilitation gym for stroke patients at Montagu Hospital, featuring cutting-edge robotic equipment and virtual reality-assisted tools designed to revolutionise patient recovery. The Chair and Chief Executive recognised the importance of technology in the future delivery of healthcare services, which the Trust would continue to explore.</p> <p>In its first year over 1,300 surgical procedures had been carried out at Mexborough Elective Orthopaedic Centre, including hip and knee replacements. This work supported a significant reduction in waiting lists across South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw and patient feedback had been very positive. 72% of patients were discharged on the same day as their procedure and there was an average length of stay of one day. To further expand surgical capacity, the Trust hoped to recruit additional orthopaedic consultants, exploring Saturday working, and acquiring equipment for more complex procedures.</p> <p>Bassetlaw Hospital had benefited from significant capital investment, the Emergency Village had opened this week. The new facility provided an excellent environment for both patients and colleagues, with the co-location of services much improved, including the Assessment and Treatment Centre and Children's Observation Unit. The Children's Observation Unit was a welcomed introduction which allowed children under observation to remain in a safe and appropriate environment, eliminating the need to be transferred to Doncaster.</p> <p>The Trust had received the first community award from Doncaster University campus in recognition of its contribution to healthcare education. The Trust works collaboratively</p>	
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	<p>with Doncaster College and Sheffield Hallam University to provide clinical and non-clinical training opportunities.</p> <p>The Chief Executive confirmed that Jon Sargeant, the Trust's Chief Financial Officer had retired at the end of January 2025, he would continue to support the Place based work, including "Health on the High Street" over the coming months. Sam Wilde had joined the Trust ahead of Jon's retirement to ensure a smooth transition.</p> <p>The Chief Executive acknowledged the recent media coverage regarding the NHS financial settlement and whilst this compared favourably to government departments would present significant challenges. Planning guidance was received each year to support the development of Trust plans, aimed at meeting national standards, with a strong focus on reducing waiting lists and improving urgent and emergency care performance. There was a strong emphasis on transitioning services, including analogue to digital and where possible moving outpatient care from the hospital into the community.</p>	
COG25/02/C1.3	<p><u>Governor Activities</u></p> <p>The Associate Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Governance noted a busy Christmas and New Year period, with numerous face-to-face events at DRI, including workshops, planning sessions, and informal catch-ups with non-executive directors.</p> <p>Training took place in early January, to ensure governors had the appropriate skills and knowledge to undertake future non-executive director recruitment. Additional dates would be planned and details would be shared in due course.</p> <p>Governors had met to discuss future ways of working and attended a session with non-executive directors to provide feedback on the NHS Change initiative to develop a 10 year Health Plan.</p> <p>The Associate Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Governance encouraged governors to share areas of interest or focus and briefings or workshops to address identified needs would be arranged.</p>	
COG25/02/C1.4	<p><u>Governor Questions</u></p> <p>Public Governors, Mark Bright and Lynne Logan, raised a query regarding the date of the governor briefing for virtual wards and whether it was still taking place. The Chair confirmed that the meeting would go ahead as planned. The virtual ward continued to play a crucial role in supporting patients at home, helping to keep them safe and well, and preventing unnecessary hospital admissions, whenever possible. The Chair also reported that a virtual ward carol service had been hosted before Christmas in the Education Centre, which had a positive impact on everyone involved.</p> <p>Staff Governor, Gavin Portier asked governors to provide constructive feedback on the recruitment training session held at the start of year to help inform the planning of future sessions.</p> <p>In response to a question from Partner Governor, Alexis Johnson regarding the reported financial constraints and the approach to manage any potential risks to patient care. The Chief Executive reported that the Trust followed a Quality Performance Impact Assessment (QPIA), which considered the impact of proposed actions on the quality of patient care. The Chief Nurse and Executive Medical Director were responsible for this</p>	

	<p>process and ensuring there was no risk of harm to patients. The way in which services had traditionally been provided was expected to change, with a need to re-design services for greater efficiency, working collaboratively with our partners, such as the 'Health on the High Street' initiative. An unprecedented budgetary challenge of £30 -35 million would be seen, however, decision making would remain thoughtful and justifiable, ensuring the right decisions were taken.</p> <p>Public Governor, David Northwood, enquired if any neighbouring trusts had available capacity that could be utilised. The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that collaborative working was very much the future approach. Going forwards it was likely that each organisation would not deliver every service, there would be a need to ensure services remained accessible, were of high quality and supported a reduction in waiting times.</p> <p>Public Governor, Sheila Walsh asked the Chief Executive Office about the increase in flu cases this year, particularly in Bassetlaw, and queried the cause of the rise or whether it could be linked to the flu vaccination, given the changes in the rollout scheme with fewer clinics held for flu vaccinations. The Chief Executive confirmed that both factors could be at play. During the COVID pandemic, society became overwhelmed with immunisations, leading to reduced support and enthusiasm. Colleague vaccination rates had reduced post pandemic, making previous vaccination levels difficult to achieve. Planning for the next season started now as the southern hemisphere's winter indicated what may be expected next winter. This was dependent on factors, such as the dominant flu strain and its virulence. Staff Governor, Gavin Portier, confirmed that Occupational Health was within his remit and as well as being actively involved in the flu campaign confirmed that the vaccination model used this year was the same as last year, and in agreement with the Chief Executive, confirmed that the lower uptake was likely due to the general decline in vaccination rates in society, with only a 29% take up rate seen amongst colleagues.</p>	
COG25/02/D1	<p><u>Chairs Assurance Logs</u></p> <p>The Chair's assurance logs from the Board's assurance committees were shared with governors.</p> <p>Non-executive Director, Hazel Brand confirmed there had been a good level of interest in the Head of Charity vacancy, with interviews due to take place shortly. The public charity lottery had over 2,000 members and the public could join via this link https://dbthcharity.co.uk/join-the-dbth-charity-lottery/ . The future management of the charity would be considered by the Board of Directors and governance arrangements would be reviewed and refreshed.</p> <p>Public Governor, Mark Bright, noted partial assurance had been taken in respect of Just Culture, the discussion focused on identifying actions to support the handling of case management workload. Non-executive Director, Lucy Nickson, had recently taken over as Chair of the People Committee and agreed to bring an update on this to the next Council of Governors meeting.</p>	LN
	<p><i>The Council of Governors:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Noted and took assurance from the Committee Chair's Assurance Logs.</i> 	

COG25/02/D2	<u>Minutes of the Council of Governors held on 07 November 2024</u>		
	<i>The Council of Governors:</i> - <i>Agreed the minutes dated 7 November 2024 were a true record.</i>		
COG25/02/E1	<u>Questions from members of the public previously submitted prior to the meeting.</u>		
	The Associate Director of Strategy, Partnerships & Governance had one question from Public Governor, Irfan Ahmed regarding the management of cancer patients in Sheffield and this question had been sent to the Chief Operating Officer to respond directly to Irfan Ahmed. The response would be added to the log for completeness.		
COG25/02/F1	<u>Any other Business</u>		
	No items of other business were raised.		
COG25/02/F2	<u>Items for escalation to the Board of Directors</u>		
	No items for escalation were reported.		
COG25/02/F3	<u>Governor Board/Meeting Question Database</u>		
	<i>The Council of Governors:</i> - <i>Received and noted the question database.</i>		
COG25/02/F4	<u>Collective Governor Response (Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System) – NHS Change Consultation</u>		
	The Associate Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Governance confirmed that this paper had been distributed for information only, having previously been discussed by the Council of Governors.		
	<u>Date and time of next meeting (Verbal)</u>		
	Date:	15 May 2025	
	Time:	15:00	
	Venue:	DRI Boardroom	
COG25/02/G	Meeting Close:	16:26	