

Cover Sheet

Council of Governors Meeting: Wednesday 14 July 2021

CoG2021.16

Title: Future Arrangements for Meetings of the Council and its
Committees

Status: For Discussion

History: New Paper

Board Lead: Trust Chair

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Confidential: No

Key Purpose: Policy

Executive Summary

1. This paper is presented to provide an opportunity for governors to reflect on future arrangements for meetings of the full Council and of its committees as restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic gradually reduce.
2. It highlights factors that may be relevant in agreeing the best approach including:
 - Public accountability and participation;
 - Development of effective working relationships;
 - Trust strategy on digital working;
 - Covid-19 risk assessment; and
 - Supporting governor participation.
3. It also asks the Council to consider its approach to reviewing and strengthening the memberships of its committees in the light of changes in the Council's composition following recent elections.

Recommendations

4. The Council of Governors is asked to:
 - **consider** its preferred approach to future working arrangements; and
 - **consider** its preferred approach to reviewing committee memberships.

Future Arrangements for Meetings of the Council and its Committees

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This paper is presented to provide an opportunity for governors to reflect on future arrangements for meetings of the full Council and of its committees as restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic gradually reduce.
- 1.2. It also asks the Council to consider its approach to reviewing and strengthening the memberships of its committees in the light of changes in the Council's composition following recent elections.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Covid-19 pandemic has enforced a number of changes in the way in which the Council and its committees have operated, most significantly by requiring meetings to take place virtually rather than face-to-face.
- 2.2. In addition some previous members have left committees following recent elections, whilst newly-elected governors may wish to consider volunteering to become committee members.
- 2.3. These factors make it timely for the Council to consider how it might most effectively operate in the future as it becomes possible to transition away from the arrangements that have been necessary during the pandemic.

3. Principles for Future Council of Governors Arrangements

- 3.1. There are a number of factors to which governors will wish to have regard in considering future arrangements and these are summarised briefly below.

Public Accountability and Participation

- 3.2. Governors are accountable to the constituencies electing them and one way to assist staff in the public to hold their governors accountable is through holding Council meetings in public. This allows members to see governors undertaking their role and provides opportunities for governors to speak to members of the public attending.
- 3.3. While meetings are being held virtually the Trust is making recordings available on its website to assist with this accountability function. It is recognised that this does not permit the type of direct interaction that was possible at in-person meetings. It is noted, however, that the experience of the Trust with its APM and Board meetings has been that far more people have viewed recordings than tended to attend physical meetings in the

past. Public attendees at in-person Council meetings have historically been in the low single figures.

Development of Effective Working Relationships

- 3.4. The importance of meeting in person to the development of effective working relationships is recognised. It is noted in particular that the Council now has new governors who have not had the opportunity to meet each other or their fellow governors face-to-face. Similarly new non-executive directors have been appointed who governors have not been able to meet in person. The value of in-person meetings and informal discussions in developing effective working relationships is an important consideration.

Trust Strategy on Digital Working

- 3.5. It is noted that the Trust has a 'digital by default' strategy to maximise the opportunity for digital approaches wherever possible, recognising the potential for these to improve efficiency and make better use of time for busy individuals.
- 3.6. Governors may wish to consider the characteristics of meetings and events that it is particularly important to undertake face-to-face and those which might continue to operate virtually. This may involve different approaches for Council meetings, committee meetings and seminars.

Covid-19 Risk Assessment

- 3.7. Whilst the national vaccination programme has reduced risks for many the Trust will wish to continue to ensure that it does not expose individuals who may remain vulnerable to risk unnecessarily during the third wave of the pandemic.
- 3.8. The practicalities of social distancing will also need to be taken into account in considering suitable venues for face-to-face events.
- 3.9. The choice of venues is also likely also to include a preference for options away from the Trust's hospitals to reduce risks for patients who have greater vulnerability to Covid-19.

Supporting Governor Participation

- 3.10. The Council will wish to reflect on the approaches that best support the participation of all governors. The use of virtual meetings may be beneficial for governors with long travel times or who find travelling to meetings difficult and they may be able to participate in events more easily and frequently.
- 3.11. However, it is also the case that some governors may find virtual meetings a barrier to participation and be more comfortable interacting with colleagues in a physical setting.

Next Steps

- 3.12. The Council may wish to consider establishing a working group to develop recommendations for future working practices. This could be supported by a survey of governors to establish preferences in terms of issues such as the time of day, length and frequency of meetings.

4. Committee Memberships

- 4.1. The Council of Governors currently has three standing committees:
- The Remuneration Nominations and Appointments Committee (Chair: Jonathan Montgomery)
 - The Patient Experience, Membership and Quality Committee (Chair: Sally-Jane Davidge)
 - The Performance, Workforce and Finance Committee (Chair: Cecilia Gould)
- 4.2. As noted above, committee memberships have been affected by recent elections and there is an opportunity to refresh and replenish the composition of the Council's committees.
- 4.3. A survey is currently being undertaken to update our understanding of the skills and knowledge available to the Council through its governors and this may inform decisions about the future memberships of committees.
- 4.4. The Council may also wish to consider whether there should be a formal process of rotation such that the memberships of committees are reviewed on an annual basis and whether maximum terms should be set for memberships of committees. The aim would be to achieve an appropriate balance between turnover and continuity.
- 4.5. It is also suggested that newly elected governors might be offered the opportunity to join forthcoming meetings of committees in a 'shadowing' role to better understand how they operate and to consider whether they might wish to volunteer to join them in the future.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. The Council of Governors is asked to:
- **consider** its preferred approach to future working arrangements; and
 - **consider** its preferred approach to reviewing committee memberships.