

Management in Confidence

HRA Board meeting minutes (Part 1 – Public Session)

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| Date: | 17 May 2023 | |
| Time: | 12.30pm – 2.35pm | |
| Present: | Richard Cooper (RC) | Non-Executive Director |
| | Professor Andrew George (AG) | Non-Executive Director |
| | Dr Nicole Mather (NM) | Non-Executive Director |
| | Dr Janet Messer (JM) | Director Approvals Service |
| | Neelam Patel (NP) | Non-Executive Director |
| | Becky Purvis (BP) | Director Policy & Partnerships |
| | Professor Sir Terence Stephenson (TS) | Chair |
| | Julie Waters (JW) | Interim Chief Digital Transformation Officer |
| | Professor Matt Westmore (MW) | Chief Executive |
| | Karen Williams (KW) | Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Resources |
| In attendance: | Matt Balding (MB) | Deputy Director Finance & Estates |
| | Nicola Burgess (NB) | Improvement & Liaison Manager |
| | Richard Convey (RCo) | Corporate Governance Manager |
| | Jonathan Fennelly-Barnwell (JFB) | Deputy Director Approvals Service |
| | Penelope Gregory (PG) | PA to Deputy Chief Executive (minutes) |
| | Will Griffiths-Stent (WGS) | Engagement Manager |
| | Pam Micallef (PM) | Staff Voices |
| | Juliana Araujo (JA) | Staff Voices |
| | Stephen Tebbutt (ST) | Company Secretary |
| | Naho Yamazaki (NY) | Deputy Director Policy & Partnerships |
| Observers: | Kat Evans | Daniel Younghusband |
| | Eve Hart | Kate Evans |
| | Peter Hart | Shevon Prince |
| Apologies: | Katherine Guerin | Deputy Director Organisational Development |
| Venue: | F2F Manchester & MS Teams | |

| No. | Record of discussion | Action owner |
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| 1 | Welcome, housekeeping and apologies. TS welcomed all to the meeting. | |
| 2 | Conflicts of interest. None to note. | |

Management in Confidence

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| 3 | <p>Review of minutes from previous meeting</p> <p>The Board reviewed and accepted the minutes of the previous meeting dated 15 March 2023 as a true and accurate record of events.</p> | |
| 4 | <p>Review of actions from previous meeting / matters arising</p> <p>None to note.</p> | |
| 5 | <p>Update from the Chair</p> <p>TS reported the HRA Business Plan has been published and expressed thanks to all involved.</p> | |
| 6 | <p>Update from the Chief Executive</p> <p>MW provided a verbal update.</p> <p><u>HRA Business Plan</u> MW highlighted the publication of the HRA Business Plan and thanked all involved.</p> <p><u>Shared Commitment on Public Involvement</u> MW advised a meeting/workshop had taken place with partners across the sector re the shared commitment which is co-hosted by National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and the HRA. The shared commitment aims to improve the quality of public involvement across the health and social care research sector and includes 17 organisations.</p> <p><u>National Contract Value Review</u> MW provided an update on the national contract value review which aims to make it easier and faster to set up commercial trials in the UK.</p> | |
| 7 | <p>Performance Report (including Risk Register)</p> <p>The Board received and noted the Strategic Performance Report Quarter 4, summarised by KW, which details the performance of the HRA in delivering the organisational strategy, focussing on four key areas, our people, our customers and stakeholders, our services and finance.</p> <p><u>Our People</u> KW reported a decrease in staff capacity this year reflecting the challenging external workforce environment. Results from the staff survey have been received which indicate a decrease in staff engagement, therefore an action plan will be implemented to address this. KW confirmed an all-staff VC is planned for 24 May to present the survey findings, to which Board members are invited to attend. KW confirmed a report on the staff survey will be presented to the Board in September.</p> | |

Management in Confidence

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| | <p><u>Customers and Stakeholders</u> The Board was pleased to note customer satisfaction continues to outperform our target of 75% and achieved a significant improvement in March (91%).</p> <p><u>Our Services</u> The Board learned work continues to be undertaken in respect of Research Ethics Committee (REC) member recruitment with new activity having commenced in March. The Board was pleased to learn the new on-line application form appears to have been successful in giving a higher conversion rate from expressions of interest to becoming a REC member. JFB advised the team continues to explore the interview process to discover the best approach. The Board discussed the length of time this particular metric has been red and whether this now signifies 'the norm'. Action: Review metric for REC Member recruitment.</p> <p>Following a question from a meeting observer, the Board discussed proportionate review confirming the process is a full review but by a smaller number of people considering an application with no material ethical issues.</p> <p>The Board questioned why the number of studies reviewed at meetings has decreased from six studies to four. JM explained that the number of studies reviewed has reduced for those RECs requesting a decrease however the number of studies reviewed at each meeting remains variable. There are many factors for the reduction in studies however reasons include the amount of documentation REC members are required to review and the amount of screen time involved.</p> <p>The Board noted HRA Approval timelines for clinical trials of investigational medical products (CTIMPs) have risen since August 2022 and questioned if any mechanisms had been put in place to work with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to help reduce this figure. JM confirmed conversations with our MHRA colleagues are taking place about how to speed up through put.</p> <p><u>Risk Register</u> The Board received and noted the Strategic Risk Register Quarter 4 2022-23 (Part 1 - Public) which details the strategic risks facing the HRA, summarised by ST. ST reported the risk register had been reviewed at the HRA Audit & Risk Committee May meeting and confirmed no movement in trends.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">JM</p> |
| 8 | <p>Portfolio dashboard (Quarter 4 22/23)</p> <p>The Board received and noted the Portfolio Dashboard and Plan which details the progress being made on the major programmes of change within the HRA's portfolio.</p> <p>The Board learned the HRA website project has closed but will restart in a few months' time when there is more certainty about requirements. MW expressed thanks to all who had participated in the project.</p> | |

Management in Confidence

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| 9 | <p>Strategic engagement update</p> <p>TS welcomed WGS to the meeting.</p> <p>The Board received and noted the Strategic Engagement Update: who we are talking to, about what, and why – May 2023 which provides an overview of the HRA’s strategic engagement activity from early March to early May 2023 to support our strategic objectives.</p> <p>The Board was pleased to learn a webinar had been held to Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) members on ambitions and priorities for equality and diversity, transparency, and public involvement in clinical trials on the 16 May.</p> <p>The Board requested more detail regarding our proactive engagement with the commercial sector be provided for the July Board.</p> | |
| 10 | <p>Board Effectiveness Report</p> <p>The Board received and noted the Board Effectiveness report which provides a summary of the Board effectiveness review findings. An externally facilitated effectiveness review was conducted this year, in line with the principles of the UK Corporate Governance Code. The Board was pleased to note that in general, the findings were largely positive with the independent auditor judging the Board has the structure, processes, people, and performance to deliver. The requirements of the Code of Good Practice for Corporate Governance are being met with the required responsibilities being suitably discharged.</p> <p>The Board reviewed and discussed the suggestions for improvement detailed on pages 12 to 14 of the report, agreeing the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Shared vision – to be addressed in July. 2) Further development of the forward agenda – the corporate calendar will be tied more closely to the shared vision. 3) Roles and responsibilities – NED portfolios will be updated to reflect the Board vision. 4) Board papers – a new coversheet and guidance will be developed. 5) Board attendance and provision of some decision making and reflection opportunities for Board members only – after discussion and careful consideration, the Board agreed the Private Board should continue with its current membership but an option retained for Board members only to meet if required. 6) NED appointments – the Board agreed it would be preferable if NED appointments were more staggered but acknowledged the current limitations to achieve this. 7) Public meetings – the Board discussed the benefits of recording or live streaming meetings whilst acknowledged this is a business meeting rather than an engagement activity. The Board was pleased to note a project regarding board transparency and accessibility is being undertaken and findings will be shared at a future meeting. | |

Management in Confidence

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| 11 | <p>Implementation activities and timescales of Approvals service improvement approach and plans 2023</p> <p>The Board welcomed NB to the meeting.</p> <p>The Board received and discussed the paper, Approvals Service Improvement Approach and Plans 2023 which provides an overview of the Approvals Service's approach to continuous improvement in the context of wider HRA developments in this area. The paper also highlights improvement activities, including plans on recommendations from Think Ethics, and where recommendations remain on the pipeline for future consideration.</p> <p>The Board discussed what changes might make the most difference, learning that in addition to clustering several smaller ideas and improvements, staff review and a quality standard of participant information could potentially be very impactful. It was recognised that it may not be practical or realistic to implement all suggestions detailed in the report, however the Board emphasised the need to identify and deliver specific initiatives and for progress to be appropriately monitored and communicated at a future board meeting.</p> | |
| 12 | <p>Risk management policy and procedure</p> <p>The Board welcomed RCo to the meeting.</p> <p>The Board received and noted the risk management policy and procedure (already approved by the HRA Executive Committee and the HRA Audit & Risk Committee), submitted for approval.</p> <p>The Board confirmed approval for the risk management policy and risk management procedure.</p> | |
| 13 | <p>Staff Voices update</p> <p>The Board welcomed JA and PM to the meeting.</p> <p>JA fed back on the recent activities of staff voices to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staff forum has been relaunched as staff voices with updated terms of reference. - created a monthly newsletter with the first published on 10 May. - meetings will now be held bi-monthly and co-chaired by a staff voices rep and the head of people. - member of the union attending meetings. - membership of staff voices complete and no vacancies. - staff voices reps taking a role in the in the induction of new staff. - staff voices reps attending Board and adhoc meetings. - attending staff led interest groups and vice versa. - planning face to face meetings with staff voices reps. <p>The Board thanked JA/PM for the update and congratulated staff voices for achieving full representation and for the work undertaken over the past year.</p> | |

Management in Confidence

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| 14 | Out of session items / items for Board interest to note. None to note. | |
| 15 | Any other business None to note. | |
| 16 | Questions from members of the public None to note. | |
| 17 | Date of next meeting: 12 July 2023, venue – London. | |