

SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST

Minutes of a meeting of the South Eastern HSC Trust

Finance & Performance Committee held on

Monday 20 February 2023 at 11.00am

in the Meeting Room, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital

and via Zoom (Link: 2421223704 Passcode: 717527)

Present:	Mr M Mawhinney Mr N Brady	Non-Executive Director (Chairman) Non-Executive Director
In Attendance:	Ms W Thompson Mr J Patton Miss C Hughes	Director of Finance & Estates Interim Trust Chairman Personal Assistant
Apologies:	Mrs H Moore	Director of Planning, Performance & Informatics

01/23 Welcome

Mr Mawhinney welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that apologies had been received from Ms Coulter, Chief Executive.

Action

02/23 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

All present confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest with any of the items on the agenda.

03/23 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 28 November 2022

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 28 November 2022, which had been circulated with papers for the meeting, were approved.

04/23 Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

Mr Mawhinney noted that all items arising from the previous meeting were included on the agenda for the meeting.

05/23 Business Case : Resurfacing of Multi-Storey Car Park, Ulster Hospital

A briefing paper and business case in respect of the Resurfacing of the Multi-Storey Car Park, Ulster Hospital, had been circulated with papers for the meeting.

Action

In response to queries raised by Mr Mawhinney, Ms Thompson advised:-

- Disrepair of levels 7 and 8 of the Multi-storey Car Park: the surface has eroded over time due to traffic, winter gritting, etc. The Estates Team have carried out some patch repairs over the years but the work detailed in the business case would provide a long term solution.
- Drains and Gullies: The work will replace any defective gullies and resurface levels 7 and 8.
- Potential impact on structural integrity: If the proposed works are not carried out there is potential for salt water to penetrate the concrete which could lead to concrete cancer which would lead to costly repairs.
- Prioritisation of this Business Case: Car parking is a vital part of health and social care provision and this public car park provides a service to the patients and visitors at the Ulster Hospital. The business case includes LED lighting replacement and funding for this will be sought via the Department of Health (DoH) Invest to Save scheme.

Mr Brady enquired if there has been any underlying structural damage and Ms Thompson advised that a survey was carried out in this respect and no concerns were identified. The proposed works will avoid concrete cancer.

Mr Mawhinney sought and received Committee approval for the Business Case.

06/23 Finance Report – Month 9

The Finance Report – Month 9 (December 2022) had been circulated with papers for the meeting.

Ms Thompson commented that this Finance Report will be presented at Trust Board on 22 February 2023. In presenting the report Ms Thompson noted that there has been very little movement from the previous month and, a work is being finalised for Month 10, indications that the position remains steady. The only change has been a reduction of £1m in the deficit position due to a reduction in energy costs (specifically gas prices). Due to the energy cost fluctuations DoH had taken on the regional responsibility for these costs and provided ring fenced funding. It had been agreed that any reductions in costs would be returned but DoH have now advised that the Trust can retain any reduction towards the deficit position.

During detailed discussion Mr Mawhinney enquired about the capital funding utilisation and Ms Thompson advised that

often Estates projects straddle financial years and year end surveys are undertaken to issue completion certificates before payment. Often large payments are made at the end of the financial year. Another reason for capital expenditure apparently not being utilised until the end of the financial year may be the lapse in systems between goods being receipted and the generation of a payment. Ms Thompson commented that often additional capital funding is received late in the financial year but this year only £1m has been allocated and it has been earmarked for utilisation.

Mr Mawhinney noted that the Lisburn Primary Community Care Centre will be opened later this month. Given that the Committee had discussed this building on a regular basis, he enquired if a meeting of the Committee could take place there. Ms Thompson confirmed that this would be arranged for the next meeting.

In response to a query regarding the Domiciliary Care and Direct Payments graph on page 8 of the Finance Report, Ms Thompson advised that the graph can be affected by the number of weeks in a month (eg November had 4 weeks and December had 5 weeks). There is also an increase due to inflationary uplifts for these payments. Ms Thompson noted that there has been a growth in Domiciliary Care hours but this has not been significant. There remain high levels of unmet need within Domiciliary Care due to limited capacity in the sector.

Mr Mawhinney enquired about PPE funding and Ms Thompson advised that the Strategic Planning Performance Group (SPPG) have asked for the Trust's forecast of Covid costs for 2023/24 and this has been provided as accurately as possible. This forecast is based on PPE; Testing; Vaccines and some Infection Control.

Mr Brady asked if any detail has been received regarding the future of Agency and Locum usage and off-contract Agencies. Ms Thompson advised that the Trust has the lowest off-contract usage (including Medical Locums) in the region and only very specialist areas use off-contract Agencies (eg Prison Healthcare). Two regional tenders have been issued for Agencies in respect of Agenda for Change (AfC) staff and other for Medical & Dental staff. The contract for AfC Agencies is expected to be awarded in March 2023 and the other will be some time later, perhaps the middle of the next financial year. Ms Thompson commented that other Trusts who have higher Agency costs will achieve more benefits from these new contracts than South Eastern Trust. During discussion Ms Thompson commented that there will always be an escalation protocol

to ensure that staff can be employed if there are patient safety concerns.

Action

Mr Brady highlighted discussion at the previous Audit Committee in respect of the accounting treatment of funds for a Sick Pay issue. Ms Thompson confirmed that previously Trusts had an accrual for an issue in respect of a legal case by PSNI staff who successfully sought to receive overtime/holiday pay which they would have earned if not on sick leave at the time. This issue remains a liability for the Trust but no timescale is available for when it is likely to be awarded nor a date to backdate the payment to. The issue is being discussed at DoH and Trade Union level. Whilst it was treated as an accrual (ie funds were being held for this payment), the Auditors were not content and after much debate it is now to be treated as a provision (ie the funds will be released from the balance sheet and when agreement is received on the payment, it will be hit in that financial year). This accrual has now been released from the balance sheet.

07/23 Summary Financial Outlook 2023/24

A Draft Summary Financial Outlook 2023/24 had been circulated with papers for the meeting.

In presenting the Summary Financial Outlook 2023/24, Ms Thompson noted that a similar paper will be presented at the March Trust Board.

Ms Thompson advised that SPPG had sought scenarios from Trusts to achieve 3% and 5% savings in 2023/24 and this paper outlines the scenarios forwarded to SPPG. The information is being used by SPPG in discussions with the DoH and the Treasury regarding funding for 2023/24.

During discussion Ms Thomson highlighted page 4 of the paper which detailed the movements in the 2022/23 financial position. The main reasons for the improvement from £50.4m to £6.3m related to additional non-recurrent funding received during the year. Non-recurrent funding is provided for very specific reasons, eg high cost cases, and some of these have been accepted as inescapable pressures and funding is therefore released into the financial position. This information provided assurance to the Committee that the financial forecasting is reasonable. Ms Thompson noted that page 5 of the report outlines the indicative opening position for 2023/24.

Detailed discussion took place regarding the scenarios presented for 2023/24. Ms Thompson noted that many of the scenarios have been previously presented and would

have low impact on service provision. There were other scenarios which would require regional decisions and may be politically unacceptable.

Action

In response to a query, Ms Thompson advised that the proposal to provide a “flat cash” allocation would mean that no additional funding would be received. Any regionally agreed AfC pay awards or uplifts in Nursing & Residential Care would have to be found from within the original funding.

08/23 Performance Presentation

The Performance presentation was deferred.

09/23 Any Other Business

No issues were raised.

10/23 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 27 April 2023 at 1.00pm in Lisburn PCCC.