

SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST

Minutes of a meeting of the South Eastern HSC Trust

Finance & Performance Committee held on

Monday 27 November 2023 at 11.00am

in the Boardroom, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital

Present:	Mr M Mawhinney	Non-Executive Director (Chairman)
	Mr N Brady	Non-Executive Director
	Mrs H Minford	Non-Executive Director
In Attendance:	Ms W Thompson	Director of Finance & Estates
	Mrs J Dunlop	Asst Dir Financial Management
	Mr J Patton	Trust Chairman (items 45/23 – 49/23 only)
	Mrs E Hannaway	Interim Asst Dir of Performance Improvement & Commissioning (item 50/23 only)
	Prof S Kirk	Associate Medical Director – Governance & Service Reform (item 50/23 only)
	Ms L Darragh	Consultant Surgeon (item 50/23 only)
	Miss C Hughes	Personal Assistant
Apologies:	Mrs H Moore	Director of Planning, Performance & Informatics

45/23 Welcome

Mr Mawhinney welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from Ms R Coulter, Chief Executive.

Action

46/23 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

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

47/23 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 18 October 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 October 2023, which had been circulated with papers for the meeting, were approved.

48/23 Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

The only item arising from the previous meeting was a visit to the proposed location of the Urgent Care Centre. This has been scheduled to take place immediately following this meeting.

49/23 Handover Arrangements

Action

Mr Mawhinney noted that the next meeting is scheduled for 26 February 2024 and by that time both Mr Brady and himself would have ended their tenure as Non-Executive Directors. Mr Patton took this opportunity, on behalf of Trust Board; the Executive Management Team and himself, to formally thank Mr Mawhinney and Mr Brady for their eight years of service, dedication, time and devotion to the Committee and the South Eastern Trust. Their input and dedication has been much appreciated by all involved with them in the various meetings. Mr Mawhinney thanked Mr Patton for his kind words and advised that he has enjoyed working with the Finance & Performance Committee during these very challenging times.

Mr Patton thanked Ms Minford for agreeing to take over the responsibility of Chair for the Finance & Performance Committee. Notification of replacement Non-Executive Directors is awaited from the Permanent Secretary, Department of Health. Mr Patton undertook to allocate further members to the Finance & Performance Committee when new Non-Executive Directors are appointed. Appropriate information and training will be provided.

JP

50/23 Performance Presentation : Cancer Services Performance - Breast

The updated presentation on Cancer Services Performance (Breast) was circulated. Mr Mawhinney welcomed Ms Hannaway, Prof Kirk and Ms Darragh to the meeting.

Ms Hannaway noted that at a recent Trust Board, concern had been expressed regarding the Breast Cancer Performance presented and it had been agreed that further detail should be provided to Finance & Performance Committee. The main area of concern was the Commissioning Plan target of patients first seen within 14 days following an urgent referral doe suspect Breast Cancer within 14 days. In October 2022 the percentage of achievement of this target was 76% but in October 2023 this has fallen to 7%. Ms Hannaway stressed that the 31 day target of every patient to commence the definitive treatment remains at 100%.

Ms Hannaway commented that Breast Cancer is the only tumour site which has a 14 day access target. This target has been removed in NHS England. It is possible that a new Minister for Health may review the practice in Northern Ireland. Prof Kirk stressed that the 14 day target was removed in other areas due to a lack of clinical basis or

impact on patient outcome. Representations to remove this target will continue.

Action

Ms Hannaway reported that from April 2023 to October 2023 the Breast Cancer service has received 2138 urgent referrals which is approximately a 20% increase on the same period last year. The 14 day Breast Service targets have been a challenge across the region and, at the request of the Strategic Planning & Performance Group (SPPG), the Trust had been assisting Southern Trust by taking some of their patients. The assistance has now ceased due to pressures within South Eastern Trust. She noted that there had been challenges in repatriating patients back to their own Trust. It is expected that the 14 day target will have been negatively affected during November 2023 due to the encompass Go Live and associated downturn during the first eight weeks.

During detailed discussion Prof Kirk advised that the conversion rate from red flag referral to confirmed cancer has remained static despite the growth in referrals. However, all 'red flag' referrals received are counted towards the performance. Ms Darragh explained that the Breast Clinic is a "one stop shop" where patients receive examination; investigation (including biopsy) and results via one attendance. The Breast Cancer publicity campaigns and the success of the one stop approach have contributed to an increased demand in referrals.

Ms Darragh advised that another challenging factor facing the Breast Clinic is staffing. The Service continued throughout Covid albeit with reduced numbers due to social distancing restrictions and despite a number of staffing issues during that period. The Radiology Service is part of the Clinic service and there have been staffing issues that area also which has an impact on capacity. She commented that staff are now tired and, where previously it had been possible to set up extra Clinics to deal with additional patients, the staff are not willing to work these additional hours. Prof Kirk also highlighted that there are only 5 Consultants available for the Breast Clinic and only 2 of these are full time Breast Cancer Consultants. He noted that the introduction of encompass has increased the administrative burden on Consultants and Ms Thompson advised that this issue is being reviewed/addressed.

In conclusion it was noted that the 14 day target should not be looked at in isolation. Mr Mawhinney thanked Ms Hannaway, Prof Kirk and Ms Darragh for their informative presentation and they left the meeting.

51/23 Internal Audit Report : Budgetary Control and Financial Stability 2023/24 Action

The Internal Audit Report on Budgetary Control and Financial Stability 2023/24 had been circulated with papers for the meeting.

Mr Mawhinney noted that the Internal Audit Report would be fully discussed at the Audit Committee. It was presented today for consideration in respect of page 8, recommendation 2.2 regarding presentation of staff training information to the Finance and Performance Committee. Discussion took place regarding whether the Terms of Reference should be amended to remove this requirement or if details of staff training should be presented to the Committee. Ms Thompson commented that a half day virtual training takes place four times per year and gives an overview of all areas of financial management with more detailed training being provided to individual budget holders by the appropriate Finance Team.

Following consideration it was agreed that a briefing on staff training should be presented to the Committee on an annual basis.

52/23 Finance Report – Month 7 (October 2023)

The Finance Report – Month 7 (October 2023) had been circulated with papers for the meeting.

Ms Thompson advised that the headline from the Report is that the Trust has a full year forecast deficit of £13m. The detail of the report will be discussed at the Trust Board scheduled for 29 November 2023.

Ms Thompson commented that the Confidential Trust Board Agenda for 29 November 2023 has an item regarding correspondence received from Mr Peter May, Permanent Secretary, Department of Health. The letter requested actions to reduce the forecast deficit by at least half but this is not possible without high impact measures and therefore the response is very similar to the original information presented in January 2023.

A further letter has been received from Mr May, on 14 November 2023, expressing disappointment at the response to the original letter and requesting a rapid review of contingency plans. Ms Thompson advised that, unfortunately, the only actions which would achieve savings are unpalatable eg closing beds or stopping elective work. A response has been requested for 30 November 2023 and

this is being prepared but unlikely to significantly change the financial position.

Action

Ms Thompson noted that the initial correspondence from Mr May requested a Recovery Plan for 2024/25. All Trusts across the region have received the same request. It is felt that the only way to achieve significant savings will be on a regional basis and work on this response will be carried out collectively. In response to a query Ms Thompson advised that the five main Trusts are in a similar position and not forecasting breakeven. She also noted that the opportunity to achieve any Administrative Agency savings is different for South Eastern Trust due to the implementation of encompass. In the future, when encompass is bedded down, there may be changes to some Administrative roles but it would be inappropriate to cease any Agency roles at the current time. Whilst the main encompass costs are covered by the region there are potentially other additional costs for the Trust eg extra Data Governance staff may be required to manage the significant data issues associated with encompass. One of the other suggestions from Mr May was to review discretionary spend but this is already being actioned as part of the original savings plan. Ms Thompson confirmed that the Executive Management Team are well aware of the need to achieve the savings identified within each Directorate.

During discussion Ms Thompson confirmed that Charitable Funds are utilised for appropriate items, for example they can be used for training but only if the fund is appropriate and it is not mandatory training.

53/23 Schedule of Dates for 2024

The proposed Schedule of Dates for Finance and Performance Committee in 2024 had been circulated with papers for the meeting. The dates were noted and agreed.

54/23 Any Other Business

No issues were raised.

55/23 Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Monday 26 February 2023 at 11.00am in the Boardroom, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital.