

**SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST**

**Minutes of a meeting of the South Eastern HSC Trust**

**Finance & Performance Committee held on**

**Monday 26 February 2024 at 11.00am**

**in the Boardroom, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital**

<b>Present:</b>	Mrs H Minford	Non-Executive Director (Chairman)
	Mr N Brady	Non-Executive Director
 <b>In Attendance:</b>	Ms W Thompson	Director of Finance & Estates
	Mrs H Moore	Director of Planning, Performance & Informatics
	Mrs J Dunlop	Asst Dir Financial Management
	Mrs E Hannaway	Interim Asst Dir of Performance Improvement & Commissioning
	Miss C Hughes	Personal Assistant

- | <b>1. <u>Welcome</u></b>   | <b>Action</b> |
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| <p>Mrs Minford welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that apologies had been received from Ms R Coulter, Chief Executive, and Mr J Patton, Trust Chairman.</p> <p>Mrs Minford advised that two Non-Executive Directors are expected to join the Committee – Mr N McKinney and Mr K Donaghy.</p> |               |
| <b>2. <u>Declaration of Conflict of Interest</u></b>   |               |
| <p>All present confirmed that they had no conflict of interest with any of the items on the agenda.</p>  |               |
| <b>3. <u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 27 November 2023</u></b>  |               |
| <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 November 2023, which had been circulated with papers for the meeting, were approved.</p>   |               |
| <b>4. <u>Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting</u></b>   |               |
| <p>There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.</p>  |               |
| <b>5. <u>Finance Report – Month 10</u></b>   |               |
| <p>The Finance Report – Month 10 (for the period ended January 2024) had been circulated with papers for the meeting.</p>  |               |

Ms Thompson noted that since the last Trust Board report there have been two significant developments which have changed the forecasted position:-

**Action**

- The NI Assembly has returned and an allocation of approximately £1 billion provided for NI. On 15 February 2024 the Minister for Finance announced that there will be funding allocated to address the 2023/24 pay award proposals and to cover the 2023/24 forecast overspends of various Departments. An allocation for the forecast deficit in Month 9 is now expected.
- There was a pay issue in Month 10 relating to three change requests being implemented on the payroll system regarding how National Insurance is calculated for staff with multiple contracts, eg permanent staff who also have a bank contract. Whilst each of the change requests had been tested and were expected to have only a minor impact, the actual implementation realised a significant pay issue for the region. Within South Eastern Trust the changes caused a spike in costs of £1.5m and affected 1400 staff to various levels. Many staff had only small overpayments of between £1 - £25 and they will be notified that this will be recouped next month. Staff with larger overpayments will be offered the option of arranging a repayment plan over a number of months. It was noted that the change requests related to retrospective payments (5 – 6 years ago), and during that period of time some of the staff who were overpaid will have left the Trust and therefore there may be difficulties recouping these amounts. Work is ongoing to resolve the Trust position and the Department of Health have indicated that they will cover the costs associated with these changes. Ms Thompson commented that this overpayment may be difficult for many staff to notice as it coincided with the change in National Insurance Contributions which has given all staff an increase in pay.

Ms Thompson advised that the Trust is reporting an in-year deficit position but assuming breakeven in 2023/24 given the announcements. This is a good position to report as it is a statutory obligation of Trusts' to breakeven. During brief discussion, Ms Thompson noted that the savings outlined in the Finance Report are being achieved but the majority are non-recurrent and therefore not available to assist with the 2024/25 position.

Discussion took place regarding the pay issue and Ms Thompson noted that the current system is aged and work is currently in progress to procure a replacement.

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In relation to the 2024/25 financial year, Ms Thompson reported that there are extreme concerns regarding the financial position. It is anticipated that there will be insufficient funding provided and this will present significant difficulties given the expected pressures which include - pay award (2023/24 funding is non-recurrent and the 2024/25 award is yet to be agreed); there will be inflationary uplifts; growth and Waiting List Initiative funding requests, to name but a few of the pressures. During discussion the overall budget for Northern Ireland was noted and potential income generation methods, particularly those related to Health Care. Ms Thompson highlighted the Health Committee, held on Thursday 22 February 2024, which had been attended by the Trusts' Chief Executives at which they had outlined the financial impact upon services. Mrs Moore added that any impact on existing services would require a consultation process.

Discussion took place regarding the legislation passed by the NI Assembly before it was suspended to cease car parking charges and how this will impact income as well as control of parking on sites. Ms Thompson advised that the planned method of retaining control of car parking spaces for visitors was Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) – when patients receive their appointment letter there would be a link to record their car number plate to ensure a space would be available. However this regional procurement has been delayed due to a legal challenge and will not be resolved until after the implementation date of the legislation. She added that the capital funding secured to purchase this equipment has now been returned to DoH. Mr Brady declared that one of his clients is a provider of ANPR but he has had no input to this project. Concern was expressed that, if the legislation is not rescinded/paused, there will be significant car parking issues in addition to the loss of income.

In conclusion, Mrs Minford welcomed the information regarding the forecast breakeven position for 2023/24.

6. **Performance Presentation : Encompass Impact on Performance**

Mrs Moore advised that following the implementation of encompass it was expected that the downturn in planned or elective activity in preparation for “go live” would be built up again. This was a priority for the stabilisation of the system and included the Trust’s Team, Epic USA and the central encompass Team. She noted that there was no activity downturn in demand-led services, eg Unscheduled Care and

**Action**

Maternity. It has been difficult to re-build beyond 75% of previous activity in some areas for a myriad of reasons. She noted that In order to prepare the performance activity information work has been undertaken to understand the new information format from the encompass system. The SET Performance team has been working tirelessly with encompass / epic, the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) and Department of Health (DoH) colleagues understand the variance in new performance information compared to pre-go live reports.

Mrs Hannaway explained the challenges faced with the change of system, some specialities are called a different name or some are recorded slightly differently. She noted that it has proved time consuming and challenging to 'map' data across both systems to ensure a like for like comparison.

Regarding the areas which have been slow to re-build to pre-encompass implementation activity levels, Mrs Hannaway explained that there have been difficulties as Northern Ireland does not yet have the digital dictation system which encompass requires. A separate regional business case has been prepared for digital dictation and this should speed up the transcription of notes, once available. During discussion, Mrs Hannaway highlighted the Breast Clinic, which had been discussed at the previous Committee meeting. The Breast Clinic operates as triple assessment via a linear patient workflow, this is proving challenging in the new system, however the team are working closely with colleagues to ensure productivity is maximised.

Another factor in delaying rebuild of activity has been training requirements. Mrs Hannaway noted that the initial training has now been updated to relate specifically to tweaks to the system since implementation. There have also been issues with Agency/Locum staff, who currently work in other Trusts which have yet to go live with encompass, being unfamiliar with the system and requiring additional training/familiarisation with the system. For example there have been delays within Paediatric Surgery as this service is provided by Belfast Trust staff once per week and therefore they are acclimatising themselves to the system. It is hoped that after Belfast Trust go live that this activity will increase. Ms Hannaway commented that some areas became familiar with encompass faster than others eg Unscheduled Care had significant activity and Medical Specialities were familiar with the Edams system which helped prepare them.

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During discussion Mrs Moore advised that some services have noted time saving benefits, for example Community Midwives can check on the system regarding patient discharge rather than having to phone the Ward or family for updates. In response to a query regarding GP access to encompass, Mrs Moore advised that GPs had chosen not to be part of the business case for the system, they will access results etc via epic care link live. However, patients will have access to their information via the MyCare app.

In response to a query Mrs Moore advised that the Trust's experience has been similar to that in the UK where pressures in the system are becoming more evident after the implementation of encompass.

Mrs Hannaway advised that the Trust Board report to be presented at the meeting on 28 February 2024 will be different to previous information as the team continues to verify and quality assure the new reports, these will be added incrementally as soon as they are available. Extensive work is ongoing between Trust and Epic staff (approximately 12-16 meetings per week) to resolve issues and help understand the variances in information. The amended templates, and the details behind these, are being discussed with SPPG and DoH colleagues and will assist the other Trusts when they go live. Belfast Trust will be the next Trust to implement encompass.

**7. Any Other Business**

Performance Presentations

In response to a query regarding selection of the topics for Performance Presentations, Mrs Moore advised that these are generally selected when there is an area of concern which has been highlighted at Trust Board. The presentation gave a deeper dive into the details behind the high level information. The area of focus is generally announced at the previous Trust Board in order to allow any other Non-Executive Directors to attend the meeting if they have an interest in that area. Mrs Hannaway commented that regular updates are then provided on the most recent presentations.

**8. Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Monday 29 April 2024 at 11.00am in the Boardroom, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital.