

7th April 2020 – Trust Board Summary

1. Introduction

A virtual meeting of the Trust Board took place on 7th April 2020; it was not possible for the meeting to be held in public due to the Covid-19 pandemic and national government guidance on social distancing. This briefing has been produced to provide an summary of the matters discussed.

Mr Phoenix opened the meeting by praising the response to the pandemic seen amongst the Trust's staff. He paid tribute to Pooja Sharma, a Trust pharmacist, who had recently died. He also welcomed Damian Reid, attending his first Board meeting following his appointment as Director of Finance.

2. Chief Executive's Report

Dr Bull provided a verbal update. He explained the structures and processes that had been introduced to the organisation in response to the pandemic. He noted a number of changes that had been made to services, emphasising that these had been made on a temporary basis to ensure continuity and patient safety during the pandemic. Stakeholders were being kept informed of the changes that were taking place which included:

- Consolidation of maternity services to the Conquest hospital
- Consolidation of emergency cardiac care to EDGH.
- Chemotherapy and day infusion services moving off-site to Sussex Coast College, Eastbourne
- Suspension of routine elective surgery

Additional critical care capacity had been realised in both main hospitals in anticipation of the pandemic's peak, which was expected in late April. Around 800 members of staff were unavailable to work, either due to symptoms or self-isolating. He reported that the Trust continued to follow national guidance about the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and that procurement colleagues were managing the situation well, despite some national shortages.

Dr Bull emphasised the importance of, where possible, maintaining business as usual for the Trust during the pandemic. This would include continued oversight of quality, safety and financial performance to ensure that the Trust was in the best possible place once the pandemic had ended.

Attendances at A&E had markedly reduced and focussed work had been undertaken throughout the system to discharge medically fit patients from hospital, leading to occupancy rates in hospital at the start of April of around 50%.

3. Integrated Performance Report Month 11 (February)

During February the Trust's 4 hour performance had been affected by increasing attendances to A&E, high occupancy rates and staff sickness. Recruitment of nursing and medical staff during February had been good, with reducing staff sickness and staff turnover reported. The Trust was anticipating that it would meet its annual financial target for 2019/20.

4. Revised Governance Arrangements

Revised governance arrangements as a result of the pandemic were approved by the Board. Changes to financial controls were based on guidance produced by NHSI/E ensuring that, while spending could be undertaken quickly, appropriate controls remained in place. Meetings of the Quality and Safety and Audit Committees would continue, albeit virtually, to provide Non-Executives the opportunity to receive assurance about the management of the Trust during the pandemic. Finance and Investment, Strategy and People and Organisation Development Committees were suspended, but regular phone calls between Committee Chairs and Executive colleagues would take place to provide assurance.

5. Papers for noting

A number of papers had already been written for the Board meeting in public prior to its reduced agenda. These were presented to the Board for information only.

The next meeting of the Board was scheduled for Tuesday 5th May 2020. This was expected to take place virtually using Microsoft Teams. Reinstatement of meetings in public would only take place once it was safe to do so.