

**ROYAL UNITED HOSPITALS BATH NHS FOUNDATION TRUST
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
HELD IN PUBLIC ON WEDNESDAY, 25TH MARCH 2020
OASIS BOARDROOM, RUH, BATH**

Present:

Voting Directors

Jeremy Boss, Non-Executive Director (*via Zoom*)
Rebecca Carlton, Chief Operating Officer
Joanna Hole, Non-Executive Director (*via Zoom*)
Sumita Hutchison, Non-Executive Director (*via Zoom*)
Bernie Marden, Medical Director (*via Zoom*)
Claire Radley, Director for People (*via Zoom*)
Alison Ryan, Chair (*Chair*) (*via Zoom*)
James Scott, Chief Executive
Nigel Stevens, Non-Executive Director (*via Zoom*)
Libby Walters, Director of Finance and Deputy Chief Executive

Non-Voting Directors

Jocelyn Foster, Director of Strategy
Brian Johnson, Director of Estates and Facilities

In attendance

Adewale Kadiri, Head of Corporate Governance
Roxy Milbourne, Deputy Head of Corporate Governance (*minute taker*)

Apologies

Lisa Cheek, Director of Nursing & Midwifery
Anna Mealings, Non-Executive Director

BD/20/03/01 Chairs Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Board members, and noted that apologies had been received from Anna Mealings and Lisa Cheek.

BD/20/03/02 Written Questions from the Public

The Chair informed the Board of Directors that no written questions had been received from the public.

BD/20/03/03 Declarations of Interest

All Directors present confirmed that they had no direct or indirect interest in any way in the matters to be considered at the meeting.

**BD/20/03/04 Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting held in Public on
26th February 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held 26th February were approved as a true and correct record of the meeting subject to moving Brian Johnson from a voting to a non-voting Director.

BD/20/03/05 Action List and Matters Arising

The action list updates were approved as presented and those that were listed as closed were approved by the Board.

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BD/20/03/06 COVID-19 Update

The Chief Operating Officer presented the Covid-19 update report and highlighted that:

- Since the last board report the situation had evolved rapidly with new national guidance received, local implementation of incident management and a changed model of care to support the clinical management of the virus.
- The Trust had experienced activity including COVID-19 patient screening, management of positive patients as inpatients and as discharged patients and within the critical care model of care.
- A Covid-19 Support Team has been established and is working with the EPRR Team, Infection Prevention and Control and Microbiology Teams and was coordinating the Trust responses to the next phase of the COVID-19 outbreak. The Trust was now operating in 'critical incident' mode and the wider regional EPRR status was a Level 4 National Emergency.
- The Trust had established Bronze, Silver and Gold command providing daily executive and clinical leadership oversight, planning and response in all areas of core clinical and non-clinical support. This was being supported by an Incident Command Centre.
- The BSW system-wide response included GOLD calls three times a week, while RUH Gold now met daily.
- On-going risks were being managed through the Bronze, Silver and Gold decision making framework and there are two specific risks which were being actively managed:
 - 1) Staffing capacity as the Trust supports self-isolation and maintains safe staffing levels to the provision of acute care
 - 2) The supply chain for PPE and critical equipment to support increasing demand for this equipment
- The Covid-19 Support Team, Incident Command Centre and Executive Team would be moving to 7 day working to manage the outbreak and provide a level of support on site.
- The Respiratory Assessment Unit was opened as part of phase one planning and was operating well; it had its own entrance and was operating as a 'respiratory ED'.
- The phase 4 clinical model would be a whole hospital response which the Trust was preparing for.

The Chair thanked the Chief Operating Officer for the update and invited questions from the Board.

Joanna Hole, Non-Executive Director noted that daily meetings were taking place Monday to Friday, and enquired as to position at the weekend. The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that this structure had already moved to 7 day working, Gold Command met daily, but BSW calls were still only three times a week. She added that the Executive Team would be supporting the 7day working.

Joanna Hole, Non-Executive Director questioned whether the process for testing for suspected Covid-19 cases had improved. The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that there was now increased capacity for testing and the Trust was looking to bring testing on-site in the next few weeks. She added that antibody testing was likely to

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be available within the next 2-3 weeks which would enable the Trust to understand how many people had been exposed.

Nigel Stevens, Non-Executive Director asked what the current absentee rates were, and in response, the Director for People stated that the Trust was using ESR data to gauge this, noting that all staff groups are affected while a number of back office staff were beginning to work from home. The Deputy Chief Executive added that it was difficult to get timely data from ESR as it was not responsive enough and therefore alternative options were being worked through. She confirmed that earlier in the week approximately 300 members of staff were either self-isolating with the virus, self-isolating as other members of the household had symptoms, or were self-isolating due to pregnancy or underlying health conditions.

Nigel Stevens, Non-Executive Director stated acknowledged that maintaining the welfare of staff was hugely challenging in these circumstances, and enquired how this was being managed. The Director for People stated that a Workforce Group had been established to look at this and was being led by the Head of the Employee Assistant Programme (EAP). She added that there was a national steer on support for staff through which the Trust was working. The Deputy Chief Executive added that the Trust was also looking at what additional support the local Universities and Community Groups could provide to support staff. She stated that the anxiety levels of staff were increasing and so the daily communication to staff today would focus on how to manage anxiety and remind people how to look after their own well-being.

Nigel Stevens, Non-Executive Director stressed the importance of team bonding as colleagues may be better able to identify when staff may need additional mental health support. The Director for People confirmed that there was a daily communication to all staff as well as the daily Chief Executive’s video message and both channels were being utilised to remind staff of support available.

The Chair stated that she had received feedback directly from staff who were concerned that their concerns were not being responded to in a timely manner, and she questioned whether the Freedom to Speak Up mechanisms were robust enough for staff to share concerns. The Chief Executive stated that staff were undertaking a very difficult job and on the whole doing it well. He emphasised the importance of maintaining the robustness and integrity of the EPRR process. He added that he was not receiving messages of concern, but that there was much more of a focus on “Team RUH”. The Chief Operating Officer stated that one area of concern regarding staff was the lack of recognition of the social distancing guidance and this was therefore a key focus for all communications. Where possible, meetings were taking place virtually using Zoom or conference calls.

Sumita Hutchison, Non-Executive Director made the point that staff should have more access to Management to ensure a cohesive decision is made by the organisation. In response, the Chief Executive reiterated that the Trust needed to protect the integrity of EPRR system and staff should continue to flag issues through the channels available (bronze, silver and gold). Directors were filming weekly videos as well as the daily Chief Executive’s video message which would move to 7 days. An email Q&A system was being established for staff and would be up and running by the end of the day. Joanna Hole, Non-Executive Director expressed confidence that the Trust had good, strong resilience planning in place as well as

robust risk management structures, and these will stand the organisation in good stead.

BD/20/03/07 Resolution to exclude the press and public

The Chair proposed that representatives of the press and other members of the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting having regard to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, publicity of which would be prejudicial to the public interest. The Board of Directors approved the resolution.

The meeting was closed by the Chair at 10:30