

Minutes (APPROVED)

NHS NATIONAL SERVICES SCOTLAND (NSS)

MINUTES OF STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2020 HELD VIA TEAMS, COMMENCING 1330HRS

Present: Mr John Deffenbaugh, Non-Executive Director [Chair]
Mr Tam Hiddleston, UNISON
Mr Gerry McAteer, UNISON
Mr Mark McDavid, Non-Executive Director
Ms Suzanne Milliken, Union Representative
Mr Keith Redpath, NSS Chair
Mr Ian Cant, Employee Director
Mrs Susan Cook, UNISON

In Attendance: Ms Lisa Blackett, Non-Executive Director
Mrs Mairi Gaffney, Head of Healthy Working Lives
Mr Gordon Greenhill, Non-Executive Director
Mrs Jacqui Jones, Director of HR & Workforce Development
Professor Arturo Langa, Non-Executive Director
Mr Neil Redhead, NSS Head of Estates and Facilities
Mr Colin Sinclair, Chief Executive
Ms Aileen Stewart, Associate Director of HR
Mrs Lynsey Bailey, Committee Secretary

Apologies: None

ACTION

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mr Deffenbaugh welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies as above. Members were asked to declare any interests in the context of the agenda items to be considered. No interests were declared.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM NSS STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ON 26 AUGUST 2020 [papers SG/20/20 & SG/20/21 refer]

2.1 Following a brief discussion Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 26 August 2020 as a true and fair record.

2.2 Members noted that all actions were either completed, covered by the agenda, or being taken forward outwith the meeting.

3. NSS PARTNERSHIP FORUM UPDATE

3.1 Mr Sinclair and Mr Cant updated Members on the work of the NSS Partnership Forum since the previous NSS Staff Committee meeting. Members noted that the Partnership Forum had still mostly been focussing on continuing the COVID-19 response and monitoring/mitigating the impact on staff. The test, trace, and vaccinate programmes, along with provision of shared services for Public Health Scotland, had been at the forefront of the agendas. There had also been discussion around staff resilience and the first results from the Pulse survey (which would be covered in more detail later in the meeting). Union colleagues advised that some of the pre-COVID issues in respect of case management were still not fully resolved although were moving in the right direction.

Headquarters

Executive Office, Gyle Square, 1 South Gyle Crescent,
EDINBURGH EH12 9EB

Chair
Chief Executive

Keith Redpath
Colin Sinclair

4. PEOPLE REPORT [paper SGC/20/22 refers]

4.1 Mrs Jones took Members through the report and highlighted the following:

- NSS remained in a fairly positive position in terms of management. It was still a work in progress but progress was being made with mandatory and statutory training in shape, as well as sorting through cases;
- Members received an overview of plans for acknowledgement of the work of contract tracing staff and how achieving the desired ratio of NSS employees to third party employees would be a longer term goal than initially expected due to the way the work was sub-contracted rather than outsourced.
- Members were also keen that efforts be made to differentiate the position in Scotland in respect of test and trace within the national media;
- The continued improvement in sickness absence and management cases was welcome and HR was looking at the lessons learned to identify what the factors have been and what could still be better, mindful of the role that the public sector could play in leading on this.
- Particular attention would be paid to the influence of working from home and the extent to which it was potentially masking any issues;
- Due to the impact of COVID-19, remobilisation of services, winter and Brexit on Boards' abilities to deliver on their priorities, the Once for Scotland Programme Board would be considering recommencing the work on policies in early January 2021;
- The Turas appraisal work had also been paused at the beginning of the pandemic but a slow catch up on that was ongoing and making progress.

Members thanked Mrs Jones for her update, noting there was a theme of how managers were continuing to adapt to the current environment, and looked forward to hearing more progress updates..

5. NSS STAFF RISKS – RED AND AMBER [paper SGC/20/23 refers]

5.1 Members noted that there were a number of historical risks within SBUs which were being managed appropriately. The main corporate risks related to remote working and the concerns were now around staff who needed to be back in the office but, for various reasons, NSS had not been able to allow that yet. While NSS was not as far forward as it had hoped to be at this point, the work already done to make the buildings as COVID-safe as possible had set the organisation in good stead for when restrictions could eventually be eased.

6. VACCINATION UPDATES – CURRENT FLU PROGRAMME AND COVID-19 PREPARATIONS [paper SGC/20/24 refers]

6.1 Mrs Jones spoke to the paper updating on the flu vaccination programme and highlighted the following:

- The necessary measures put in place to run the clinics as safely as possible had unfortunately reduced the numbers of staff that could be seen in each clinic which created some challenges;
- Members were updated on how the vaccine had been distributed to ensure it was used as widely as possible whilst balancing the need for prioritising frontline clinical staff (Priority 1), and those whose roles could not be done from home (Priority 2);
- As at the end of the first phase of vaccinations, there was a shortfall against the target for uptake among Priority 1 and 2 staff but Members were given an overview of the extensive work which had been done to promote and support vaccine uptake, and the plans in place to try and achieve target by the end of phase 2;

ACTION

- While poor uptake of the flu vaccine amongst clinical and laboratory staff was not an issue unique to NSS, Members had a robust discussion about research (either as NSS or part of a wider societal view) to try and establish the reasons for reluctance amongst these groups. **ACTION: HR to consider options for research into poor vaccine uptake by clinical and laboratory staff;**
- There were also some non-clinical areas with lower uptake and Members were assured that this was being discussed with the relevant Directors.

HR

6.2 Members noted the following in respect of COVID-19 vaccination preparations:

- The initial priority groups of staff had been identified for the first phase of COVID-19 vaccine delivery but consideration was being given to how that could be expanded to include donor carers and warehouse staff;
- Members discussed potential vaccination plans for the wider NSS staff group, acknowledging the additional considerations around the COVID-19 vaccines which may increase reluctance among certain groups;
- It was expected that there would also be a difference in uptake between the flu where there was choice and COVID-19 where there would be potentially less choice due to societal interest;
- Members commended the work of the delivery group around the flu vaccine, which had laid the groundwork for any COVID-19 vaccine delivery;
- The logistics behind NSS running COVID-19 vaccinations for staff meant it may be better to align with territorial boards for the initial wave of vaccinations for frontline staff, but this decision was still to be finalised.

7. COVID-19 LESSONS LEARNED [paper SGC/20/26 refers]

7.1 Members noted the following:

- An EMT workshop was being planned to consider future changes to ways of working, and future environment post COVID, which would take its outcomes to the NSS Partnership Forum;
- Members were mindful that, for some staff, working from home in compliance of a government directive will have a different response to having the choice;
- There was a pressing need to consider how long staff could continue in this way and what the resilience plan would be, as the current way of working was not necessarily more sustainable in the longer term than the original 09:00-17:00 office hours;
- There were significant opportunities to look at the range of services NSS delivered and the way they were delivered;
- Members recognised that medium and long-term visions would always need to change in response to unforeseen circumstances, so this could still be done in light of the lessons learned from the pandemic response.

8. iMATTER PULSE SURVEY [paper SGC/20/27 refers]

8.1 Members were pleased to note there had been a good response, considering this was a survey that had been done in addition to the usual staff survey.

- It provided a snapshot of how staff were feeling at a point in time, had achieved a 65% response rate but was positive;
- The emerging point from the responses was that, at the time of completing the survey, staff were feeling more anxious. An educated guess could be made as to the most likely cause of the increased anxiety but to know for sure would require going back to seek clarification;
- The qualitative data analysis would be published around 4 December 2020 but Members recognised that, due to the gap in time since the survey was done, some things will have moved on in the meantime;

ACTION

- A like-for-like comparison with the last iMatter survey was being worked on but this would take time as iMatter had included staff who were now part of Public Health Scotland;
- The main challenge was in responding to how staff felt, recognising that there may be influences on the answer to that from outside of work, so it was important to influence the work aspect of people's lives and provide as much certainty about work as possible;
- The pandemic situation was not improving as quickly as initially hoped and this would be having an adverse impact on staff morale.

9. RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE [paper SGC/20/28 refers]

- 9.1 Members were provided with an overview of how NSS was running its excellence awards differently for 2020. Members were pleased to note that it was being taken as an opportunity to celebrate a wider range of successes. 108 stories had been submitted and everyone who was able to was being encouraged to attend.

10. OTHER COMMITTEE ISSUES

- 10.1 Members were advised that at the NSS Finance, Procurement and Performance Committee earlier in the day had similar discussions about staff burnout and ensuring staff members were able to achieve the best work/life balance for them.

11. ITEMS FOR THE BOARD COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS REPORT [paper SGC/20/29 refers]

- 11.1 Members agreed the following
- Members' recognition and commendation of NSS staff's contribution to COVID-19 response;
 - NSS was beginning to understand the issues affecting staff but there was still further work to be done on this;
 - Updates on the delivery of flu vaccinations and preparations for COVID-19 vaccinations.
 - Update on Pulse Survey results and agreement on the need for positive and realistic communications to give as much certainty as possible at work.
 - Ongoing theme around role of managers and adapting their management style in the current environment.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1 Members agreed that Whistleblowing should be an item on the agenda for the next NSS Staff Governance Committee meeting in February 2021. **Action: Ms Stewart and Professor Langa to liaise about whistleblowing item for February 2021 agenda.**

**A Stewart/
A Langa**

13. REVIEW OF MEETING

- 13.1 Members felt it had been a very positive meeting and that the focus on staff wellbeing was very much what was needed at this time. They were pleased to note the positive steps being taken in this regard.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 14.1 Members noted the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, 23 February 2021 at 1400hrs.

There being no further business, the meeting finished at 1622hrs.