

Chair's Report to the Board, March 2017

March Board meeting/thank you to Ray Dawson, Acting Chair

I am very sorry that I have been unable to attend my first Board meeting after joining the Trust. Some time ago I booked an overseas holiday, and it was for this reason that I had proposed a start date later in April. However, I was more than happy to agree an earlier start given the Trust's focus on establishing a substantive leadership team as soon as possible. I would like to thank Ray Dawson for serving as Acting Chair up until the point of my arrival, and also for standing in for me as Chair during the March Board meeting.

Chair's visits across the Trust

My top priority on joining the Trust was to meet with as many staff, volunteers and patients as possible and to familiarise myself as quickly as possible with the Trust, its hospitals, wards and departments. My first day was Thursday 2 March, and since then my diary has been filled with various visits and appointments.

To date I have toured King's Mill Hospital, including the older areas of estate under redevelopment, and I spent some time with staff within the Emergency Department. I have also visited Newark hospital, where I visited the urgent care centre and various wards and departments. I have scheduled in a visit with staff at Mansfield Community Hospital in April when I return from holiday.

Although these are early days, to say that I am impressed would be an understatement. The many staff and volunteers I have met are clearly committed to their work and to delivering improvements in care that will benefit patients as well as staff colleagues. The Trust is evidently a really friendly place and there is a 'buzz' about it and tangible sense of enthusiasm. The hard work underway to build upon the Trust's various achievements over the past 18 months puts us in an excellent place to focus on becoming an outstanding Trust. I certainly feel inspired with a great deal of confidence that we can, and indeed will, get there.

I would add that a small number of staff have shared with me their desire to ensure that things do not 'slip back' now that we have achieved a good position. Indeed, it is important that we keep the momentum of improvement that has been created, and that as a Board we make sure staff are supported – and challenged - to continue to improve. As the Trust's new Chair, and as we embark on the second phase of improvement with a substantive leadership team now in place, I will be particularly interested in pursuing this agenda.

I plan to visit all wards and departments within my first three months. I am also arranging meetings with key stakeholders, including local health and care partners, Healthwatch, MPs, Overview and Scrutiny Committee chairs, and the media among others.

Stabilising the Executive Team

I was delighted to announce this month the appointment of our new Chief Executive, Richard Mitchell. Richard will join us in the Summer from his current post as Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Operating Officer at University Hospitals of Leicester. I would like to put on record that those interviewed for the post were exceptional, and I found myself in the very fortunate position of choosing our new Chief Executive from an excellent pool of first-rate candidates.

Richard's skills, experience and passion for delivering sustainable improvement are perfect to support the Trust on our journey towards becoming outstanding. He has an excellent track record of leading major change within the NHS, and clearly exhibits the well-embedded CARE values that underpin our work here.

Peter Herring will continue in post as Chief Executive until Richard starts with us. I would reiterate my media statement from last week that Peter should be proud to be handing over what is now an increasingly well-performing, stable organisation thanks to his leadership and the hard work of all Trust staff over the past year.

Governor and Membership Development

This month saw the gathering of many of our Trust governors to discuss how we might develop our NHS Foundation Trust membership as well as improve engagement and communications with members. During a facilitated session, Governors developed plans where they will take the lead on engagement activity within their respective constituencies, supported by our Communications team. As we move forward as a stable, independent Trust following the decision not to merge with NUH, the role of Governors will continue to strengthen and develop. I look forward to seeing these Governor plans come to fruition, and which will see the Trust engage with many more people in our local communities over the coming year.