**Citizens Advice Watford - Trustee Board Meeting**

**Tuesday 30 April 2019 6pm Watford Advice Centre**

**Minutes Part 1**

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| Minutes Part 1 | | |
|  | **Standard Items** | |
| 1. | **Apologies / Introductions**  Fikile Mkoyana (FM)  Stephen Cavinder (SC)  Geoff Dennis (GDennis) Volunteer representative  **Attended**  Stephen Herman (SH) Chair  Roland Bedford (RB) Company Secretary  Pui Wah Carter (PWC) Treasurer  Salim Bakirci (SB) Chief Officer  Catherine Markowski (CM) Advice Service Manager / Staff representative  Gail Tendler (GT)  Meera Lakhani (ML)  Laurence Blake (LB)  George Derbyshire (GD)  Farrukh Siddiqi (FS)  Rosie Woodhouse (minutes) |  |
|  | **Action items** |  |
|  | Funding for door guards (3). | SB |
|  | Review the business plan to incorporate new aims and principles (5b). | SB |
|  | IT infrastructure (5c). | FS? All? |
|  | Email R&C link to all trustees (13). | CM |
|  | Read the item on the Board’s role in R&C and feedback to CM (13). | All |
|  | Implement social activities for volunteers (14). | GDennis |
| 2. | **Conflicts of interest**  There were no conflicts of interest. |  |
| 3. | **Minutes**   1. **Board Meeting held on 15th January 2019**   Point 7: It was decided not to include the door guards in the recent funding application. SB will identify an alternative source of funding for these.  The minutes of the meeting on 20th April 2019 were approved by the Board and signed by the Chair.   1. **Matters Arising**   There were no matters arising. | SB |
| 4. | **Decisions by email since last meeting**   1. **Business Plan 2018-21**  * The Initial check system has been implemented but is carried out by a supervisor rather than an information assistant. Otherwise the five objectives remain the same. * Client targets were reduced to 150 calls per month from April. * The business plan will be reviewed again to consider whether / how the new Citizens Advice aims and principles should be reflected. * It is hoped HCC funding will continue but if not HCAS will fund a bid writer to identify alternative funding to replace it. It is important to note that we cannot rely on this key source of funding continuing. * The Board considered whether the lack of an HR specialist constitutes a gap in the skill set of the Board. It was agreed that CitA provides a good service in this area. * The Board would like to have succession planning and research & campaigns represented. * CM would like to establish a means of direct communication with members of the Board involved in aspects of the advice process (for example, equality and diversity).  1. **Awards for All Grant 2019**   The application for funding to develop the learning and development of volunteers was successful. The main target is to train 23 volunteer advisers (this will reduce the pressure on supervisors for case checking and supervision).   1. **Income Generation Plan**   An external consultant provided feedback on the fundraising strategy. The main feedback was that in order to achieve the targets in the fundraising plan more support is needed from the trustees, in particular for bid writing and networking. We cannot achieve all that we want to with only one person doing all the funding applications. There is a need for a competent bid writer but we have not been able to recruit anyone. There is a need to diversify so as not to rely too much on core funding from WBC. The current priority is trusts, foundations & statutory services, and more partnership applications for national bids. There was some discussion around whether to prioritise more smaller applications or fewer more substantial ones. SB is looking at more partnership applications for national bids. The aim is to submit one application per month. | SB |
|  | **Assurance Items** |  |
| 5. | 1. **Q4 Management Accounts**   The first draft of the March accounts was circulated.   1. **March 19 Financial report**   The deficit of 38k now shows as a surplus of 5k but this is due to staff vacancies and income.   1. **Budget 19/20 overview**  * This is based on expense levels in January. The IT budget and volunteer expenses have increased. Several computers have failed recently at a repair cost of £250 each. High performance computers cost £900 each but have a longer lifespan. The cheap ones bought in 2014 are failing now and the ongoing IT problems are demoralising for volunteers. The Board discussed the possibility of running software on the server rather than individual computers. The way the service is delivered is changing and a more secure, more manageable system which gives longevity is required which needs an 18-month plan. The new faster computers make a huge difference at supervision, but more people using them will slow down the speed. It was agreed the Board would look at this. * The repairs & maintenance budget is small because the landlord (WBC) covers nearly all the cost of repairs and recovers it from the service charge. * This budget includes salary increases and confirmed income sources. 24k comes from restricted reserves and this is sustainable for 3 years.  1. **CitA’s financial dashboard**   Nothing to report. |  |
| 6. | **CA Watford KPI’s**   * Numbers reduced in April because we moved some paid telephone assessor capacity to the UC project. New volunteer assessors on the rota will mitigate this to some extent but this will take time. 294 calls were answered from Watford residents by the AL group. CitA wants a national queue where the extra capacity would be spread across the country. Statistics can be deceiving, for example there were 3 people on Adviceline this morning but demand was low. * F2f targets were achieved in March. Appointment numbers are increasing. 300 fewer clients were helped last year compared with previous year. The figures for June to October were lower due to holidays / childcare. There are efforts to mitigate this by introducing the ‘simple query’ process. Other LCAs do this and record a higher number of calls, as case recording time is reduced while still recording the client contact. Receptionists are now trained to do simple query so these contacts are now recorded and turnaways reduced. Lack of supervisor capacity has meant that there is no initial check at present. |  |
| 7. | **Risk Assessment**   * The main risks ate still funding, volunteer recruitment and staffing. It was noted there has been a high staff turnover recently. There was a stable period following restructuring which has now come to an end. The ASS role is difficult to recruit to. Reasons for leaving are different for all staff members but exit interviews are undertaken and CM has been given some useful and positive feedback which is taken on board. * The Board agreed to add IT as a new risk. |  |
| 8. | **Advice Needs Analysis 2018/19**   * This shows the service is reaching all groups except those under 18. It is thought this is because this group is not affected by the issues we deal with on the whole. * There was a discussion around whether our publicity reflects the ethnic diversity of the community. We don’t promote our service because we couldn’t meet the increased demand. Clients often don’t give their ethnicity under GDPR so profile recording is less effective. |  |
| 9. | **PQF Dashboard – Quarter 4**  Client satisfaction is lower but we are making progress by seeing more clients and figures for other LCAs are comparable. |  |
|  | **Policy and Decision Items** |  |
| 10. | **Policies update**   1. Car use policy 2. **Donations**   Changes were made to the format but not the wording. The policy was approved.   1. Gender violence and abuse policy 2. Funding Approval Policy 3. **Information Risk Policy**   A query was raised on the issue of data classification on page 3 regarding whether we mark documents as confidential. As this is not done the policy will revert to the previous wording and was approved on that basis.   1. **Client Confidentiality**   The policy was approved.  No changes were made to any other policies. All policies are available on the google drive. |  |
|  | **Information/Discussion Items** |  |
| 11. | **Chief Officer’s report**  Pui Wah Carter and Farrukh Siddiqi were appointed as the new signatories for the Virgin Money bank account, to replace the previous signatories on the old account (Rosemary Wylie and James Tyerman). |  |
| 12. | **Service Manager’s report**   * Four volunteers are being trained as gateway supervisors. * Trustees are welcome to observe the initial check process in operation. * There was a discussion around the implications on gateway capacity of training assessors to be advisers. CM explained the model will remain the same with flexible roles. Previously we had more assessors than advisers – this will redress the balance. We need to recruit 10 assessors to replace one adviser. |  |
| 13. | **Research & Campaigns update**   * In the R&C report Annexe A&B are missing but available on the document in the google drive. Members of the Board were asked to read the item on the Board’s role in R&C and feedback to CM on their understanding of the role and how our work in this area could be improved. We have a committed volunteer who is working on R&C, but as a twin aim of the Citizens Advice service it needs a higher profile. CM will email the link showing how all roles in the service can become involved in R&C. The screen in the ASS room will be available to promote R&C and remind volunteers to complete evidence forms. * There was a discussion around whether R&C issues are local or national, and how we work with other charities. We work with the food bank to deliver outreach sessions and with WBC regarding the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. To do more we need more resources – a paid role of 2 or 3 hours a week would make a big difference and CM urged the Board to consider allocating resources for R&C. WBC are very clear they do not fund us for this work so funding would need to be sought elsewhere. Could we allocate funding from the PCC? It was noted that we have achieved the green band in the LSA since CM took on responsibility for R&C work. CM will update the report from January. | CM |
| 14. | **Volunteer representative’s report**  GDennis will implement a series of monthly social activities for volunteers. | GDennis |
| 15. | **Paid staff representative’s report**  Staff are grateful for the salary increase. | CM |
| 16. | **Date of next meeting**  18th June 2019  Part one of the meeting ended at 8pm. |  |