**Citizens Advice Watford**

**Trustee Board Meeting**

**Tuesday 19 June 2018**

**6pm Watford Advice Centre – MINUTES PART 1**

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|  | Minutes Part 1 |  |
|  | **Standard Items** | **Action** |
|  | **Present**  Stephen Herman (SH) Chair  Roland Bedford (RB) Company Secretary  Pui Wah Carter (PWC) Treasurer  George Derbyshire (GD)  Gail Tendler (GT)  Stephen Cavinder (SC)  Fikile Mkoyana (FM)  Geoff Dennis (GDennis) Volunteer Representative  Salim Bakirci (SB) Chief Officer  Catherine Markowski (CM) ASM / Staff Representative  Rosie Woodhouse (minutes) |  |
|  | **Apologies / Introductions**  James Tyerman |  |
|  | **Conflicts of interest**  None |  |
|  | **Minutes**   1. **Board Meeting held on 24th April 2018**  * The practice fire evacuation went well – the building was evacuated in 3 minutes. * A query was raised re the Rough Sleepers Intervention Project report. The Project Manager at New Hope will be invited to provide an update. * Balanced scorecard – the survey results are not yet finalised. * CO report - SB met with a group of other Herts managers to consider applying for funding for Financial Skills for Life training.  1. **Matters arising**   The scorecard shows a slight decrease in client diversity. The figures might be distorted by Adviceline stats which include telephone calls from areas where there is less ethnic diversity. The exact figures are in the Advice Needs Analysis document.  The minutes were approved by the Board and signed by the Chair. | **SB** |
|  | **Decisions by email since last meeting (including policy reviews)**   * WBC Small Grants   A grant of £2,000 was secured to fund UC outreach sessions at the library, but WBC Revenues & Benefits department has not yet paid the money. SB sent request for approval; the Board agreed.   * HCF Training Grant   This application is to fund training for new staff and more expensive courses for specialist caseworkers and advisers. An initial meeting has taken place but no decision as yet. |  |
|  | **Assurance Items** |  |
|  | 1. **Q1 Management Accounts (PWC)**   The final audited accounts are awaited. The financial year finished with a £36,000 surplus, due to a conservative budget and some unexpected income. The balance sheet shows a pension deficit of £103,000. CitA has referred to the Charity Commission the decision of whether to include the pension deficit in the unrestricted reserves. The Board is aware of the potential risks and will monitor the situation. There are sufficient reserves to pay off the deficit but this would expose us to some risk so this option is not being considered at present. The policy will be reviewed next quarter.   1. **April / May 2018 Financial Report**   Overall slightly under budget. |  |
|  | **Balanced Scorecard**   * Adviceline: When fully staffed we answer 200 calls per month but staffing issues in April reduced this number. With the loss of the paid assessor at the end of the year the projected figure is 150 calls per month. * Face to face targets of 230 gateways per month are being achieved. * There is a need for more advice appointments and some gateway assessors are now undertaking adviser training. This will lead to a reduction in gateway capacity but overall volunteer capacity is improving. * Four new gateway assessors have recently joined the rota and a further seven are due to join in September. * It takes two years (approx) to complete adviser training and this is offered according to organisational need, and volunteer preference and performance. * About two thirds of issues are resolved at gateway, and assessors can give extra help where there is pressure on advice appointments. * There has been no change in advice issues but we expect more UC next month as all claimants are migrated to UC. * There was a discussion around whether to keep the same format for the scorecard. Members will consider what else they might like to see in the scorecard. |  |
|  | **Risk Assessment**   * The top risks remain the same – recruiting volunteers and funding. A new short term risk is staff issues due to changes. * Succession planning to be updated. |  |
|  | **Board Skills Matrix & Board Benchmarking**   * SH will assess the completed paperwork returned by board members to identify where there are gaps in skills. * HCF has offered funding for training in TB effectiveness, which could be delivered as part of a strategy day. * A volunteer organisation, Cranfield Trust, provides free training. * Benchmarking – a checklist of good governance should be referred to and quarterly updates circulated. | **SH**  **SB** |
|  | **Business Plan Review 2018**   * We have set ambitious targets. Volunteer recruitment is good but targets for efficiency are over-optimistic. * Adviceline targets are higher than those set by CitA will be revised. * Due to staffing issue we have missed targets for Adviceline and appraisals. We will focus on improving these areas now that we are fully staffed. * There was a discussion around the efficiency of Adviceline vs face to face. Demand is higher on Adviceline but turnaways also higher. No resources are wasted whereas face to face is limited by factors such as room capacity. The new system monitors the number and duration of calls more efficiently because it includes call-backs. It is difficult to set targets for volunteers but we will look at how to improve efficiencies without compromising on quality. * It was noted that the Adviceline target is below the 3 year plan. * The board agreed there should be a Trustee succession Plan and noted that the board is inadequately age-diverse. RB will produce a document showing the length of service of each board member. | **SB**  **CM**  **RB** |
| 10. | **Stakeholder Engagement plan**  The plan was circulated. The main points are:   * Decision to pursue strategic contracts with other Herts managers (there have been a number of personnel changes at CO level recently). * Fewer opportunities for statutory funding but more engagement with HCF. * The new Mayor will talk at the AGM and has been invited to visit. * SB will pursue contacts with Watford BID. * We would only approach Richard Harrington if there was a need to do so – he has spoken at the AGM before and engages with CitA in his role of Energy Minister. We have also offered training to his staff. * We have good relationships with the housing department at WBC but could do more to improve relations with other departments particularly Revenues & Benefits. * Local residents (as well as funders) are also our stakeholders. It was agreed we should do more to improve the quality of the client satisfaction survey. The board considered whether enough is done to engage with hard to reach groups but we don’t have the resources to meet the additional demand this could create. During the ASTF project it was established that the cost of engagement with these groups is high, and other organisations such as New Hope, are better placed to do this. CM is due to meet with the project manager at New Hope and will report back at the next board meeting. | **SB**  **CM** |
|  | **Policy and Decision Items** |  |
| 11. | **Policies for approval**   * **GDPR Data Protection Policy** * We now rely on legitimate interest to record clients’ personal details but need consent for special category data. * Staff and volunteers only need DBS checks if they have unsupervised contact with vulnerable people. Everyone is supervised so DBS checks are only required for outreach or home visits. This has been carefully looked at previously. * CitA has not yet updated their GDPR learning materials.   The policy was approved by the board. | **SB** |
|  | **Information/Discussion Items** |  |
| 12. | **Chief Officer’s report (SB)**   * CitA is considering implementing a single national queue for Adviceline. SB prefers to maintain a local queue as we have some control over quality at local level and additional resources would be required for a national queue. * CitA is also considering the pros and cons of a volunteer vs paid staff model for service delivery. SB raised the cost of recruiting paid staff, the challenges of managing volunteers, and the role of the Citizens Advice service in developing volunteers, who contributed £469k last year. |  |
| 13. | **Service Manager’s report (CM)**   * SH welcomed CM to her first meeting as the new ASM. * Kalpna Budhdeo was recruited to the role of ASS for 28 hours per week starting on the 2nd July. * Mahtab Munshi was recruited to the role of telephone gateway assessor. Mahtab will also continue as a volunteer. * Penny Marriott was recruited to deliver the UC workshop on Friday mornings starting this week, on a fixed term basis to 31st March 2019. * Seven new trainee gateway assessors began their training in May. * The four trainees who started in January are now on the rota. * Vikki Molloy and Kalpna Budhdeo will start doing case checking and QAA. * Our most recent QAA score was 100% for quality of advice and 97% for customer service. * At the worker’s meeting in July we will have a speaker from the DWP talking about universal credit. * CM will be attending the R&C cluster group meeting with volunteer Daisy Kearns-Jones at which they will submit the report prepared by Daisy. This will be brought to the Board once approved. * The website is currently updated and maintained by CM, RW and Malcolm Rodger (volunteer) following the departure of JL. | **CM** |
| 14. | **Volunteer representative’s report (GDennis)**  The Volunteers Week activities were appreciated by volunteers. These included thank you cards, the summer party and lots of cake. |  |
| 15. | **Paid Staff Representative’s report (CM)**  CM has been awaiting the completion of appointing new paid staff before asking the staff whether they wish to appoint a new staff rep. The process should be in place before the AGM. | **CM** |
|  | **Date of next meeting and prospective reports**  The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 4th September.  The date of the AGM is Thursday 15th November.  Part 1 of the meeting ended at 7.55pm. |  |