**Citizens Advice Watford**

**Trustee Board Meeting**

**Tuesday 4 September 2018**

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

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| Minutes Part 1 | | |
|  | **Standard Items** | |
|  | **Present**  Stephen Herman (SH) Chair  Roland Bedford (RB) Company Secretary  Pui Wah Carter (PWC) Treasurer  George Derbyshire (GD)  Gail Tendler (GT)  Stephen Cavinder (SC)  James Tyerman (JT)  Farrukh Siddiqi (FS)  Fikile Mkoyana (FM)  Geoff Dennis (GDennis) Volunteer Representative  Salim Bakirci (SB) Chief Officer  Catherine Markowski (CM) ASM / Staff Representative  Rosie Woodhouse (minutes) |  |
|  | **Apologies / Introductions**  There were no apologies.  It was JT’s last meeting and the Chair expressed his thanks on behalf of the Board to a superb trustee. |  |
|  | **Conflicts of interest**  It was noted the council members present a potential conflict of interest. |  |
|  | **Minutes**   1. **Board Meeting held on 19 June 2018**   Point 5 should read:  ‘CitA referred us to the charities commission to look at their advice regarding the exclusion of the pension deficit. We looked at their advice and decided to exclude it.’  With this correction in place the minutes were agreed by the Board and signed by the Chair.   1. **Matters Arising**  * Item 9: the board considered whether action is needed regarding targets for volunteers answering calls on Adviceline. It was agreed there is still some work to do. CM is addressing this in appraisals and there should be a significant improvement in the next 6 months. * Succession planning: this is a work in progress. * The Mayor is invited to the worker’s meeting on the 4th October. * GDPR compliance: training is in progress for all staff and volunteers. * QAA: It was noted there is an anomaly, with a score of ‘good’ for quality of advice and ‘poor’ for client satisfaction. * Item 15: there were no nominations for staff representative so CM will continue in the role for another year. This should be brought to the AGM. |  |
|  | **Decisions by email since last meeting (inc policy reviews)**  None |  |
|  | **Assurance Items** | |
|  | 1. **Q2 Management Accounts**   The end of year accounts for 2016/17 were as expected. The accounts for the year to date are slightly ahead of budget, largely due to timing.   1. **July 18 Financial Report**   The report contains a typing error – the correct figure is £1894. The budget is underspent due to staff vacancies but the August report will show additional staff costs due to additional hours worked. Overall staff costs will show an underspend. The small underspend on office costs is due to timing.   1. **Annual Accounts 2017/18**  * Next year the wording will incorporate a statement showing that we are a local charity, to distinguish us from local government. * The Trustees’ Report and Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2018 and the Independent Examiner’s report thereon had been circulated prior to the meeting. * **Agreed** the report and accounts be **approved** and the Chair and Treasurer be authorised to sign them. |  |
|  | 1. **Balanced Scorecard (KPI’s)**  * Targets were achieved for face to face gateways but not Adviceline due to absences, call handling times and training for the new telephony system. * Due to this new system some data is not available for unique calls in July. * A new group of gateway trainees starts in September. * We are reluctant to participate in the single national queueing system proposed by Citizens Advice. Overall performance might improve but there could be a negative impact locally, and local knowledge is an advantage of the current system. * There was concern over the impact of the loss of the paid gateway assessor role. Although new gateway assessors are being recruited, others are training to be advisers. * Other LCAs use the simple query function on Casebook which improves their statistics in comparison with ours. There is no record of these calls so we don’t do it for quality purposes. Our quality is much better and this is reflected in feedback from AL meetings. * We need to expand advice capacity to respond to the demand from gateway, which is about 30% of assessments). The question of whether the call answering targets should be reviewed will be discussed at the strategy day.  1. **CitA’s Finance Dashboard**   FTE staffing levels were not provided, otherwise the figures are good.   1. **PQF Dashboard**  * Client satisfaction is in the yellow band, this is an improvement on last year. * Improved customer care at reception will be addressed by providing customer service training to receptionists. * It is likely the result reflects dissatisfaction with waiting times rather than quality of advice or experience. The service here is busier than in other LCAs locally and we are not meeting demand. CM will speak to other managers to see how we can improve this. * Another factor is that we get a lot of immigration enquiries but can only give information and advice up to OISC level 1. We could consider recruiting and / or training specialist immigration advisers to level 2 – CM will bring this to the strategy day. | CM |
|  | **Risk Assessment**  Work on the succession plan will continue when newly recruited staff have settled into their roles. |  |
|  | **Board Skills Matrix & Board Benchmarking**   * All skills are represented somewhere, with scope to enhance existing skills through training. * A new fundraising volunteer has been recruited. * A benchmarking document was circulated. RB has drafted a list of matters to be delegated to the CO. |  |
|  | **Strategy Day and Strategy Day Agenda**  This will take place in January after the board meeting on a date to be finalised.  Ideas to discuss at the strategy day are invited. Suggestions were:   * The pros and cons of a volunteer model vs a paid staff model. As a volunteer model we are part of the community, but having some paid staff would resolve issues around volunteer absence. The main issue is meeting demand. * Delivery of immigration advice to OISC level 2.   The volunteer and staff reps will ask for suggestions from staff and volunteers. The board will consider whether the outcome should be reviewed after 6 months. | |
|  | **Policy and Decision Items** | |
|  | **Policies for approval**   * **Citizens Advice Competition Protocols**   This policy doesn’t require approval. It doesn’t apply because we are not in competition with other LCAs. Different funding streams don’t count as competition. Noted rather than approved. RB will look into whether we should have our own local policy.   * **Expenses policies (vol’s + paid)**   It was noted that the volunteer expenses policy needs updating, in particular with regard to overnight expenses and subsistence. The current policy represents out of pocket expenses only and should require receipts. This will be brought to the next meeting.  SB requested approval for the expenses of one paid staff member and one volunteer to attend the national conference in Manchester in October.   * **Fraud and bribery**   Section 8 provides for a regular review of risk, and section 8 for training.  The board noted that we shouldn’t have policies as a ‘tick box’ exercise. Approved and noted we need to do what it says. | RB  SH |
|  | **Information/Discussion Items** | |
|  | **Chief Officer’s report**   * A decision is awaited on the disability benefits form filling project application with CASTAD. If unsuccessful SB has prepared an alternative bid. * The board considered whether to continue with the food bank outreach. Statistics suggest having an adviser in the bureau is a better use of resources and we still distribute food bank vouchers so there is no breach of contract. * HWAS role still vacant but targets reduced so a new application can be submitted when it is retendered. |  |
|  | **Service Manager’s report**   * Interviews are to be arranged following the resignation of an ASS (RN). There will be an impact on case checking while the new ASS is new to the role. CM to arrange an exit interview and discuss other exit interviews with SB. * R&C – it is proposed to increase the profile of R&C. ASS (KB) has attended training. * Rough Sleeping Intervention Project – the report was shared with the board and all are invited to give their feedback. * Case checking / QAA – CM outlined the action she has taken with regard to reducing outstanding cases, and explained how the additional resources devoted to case checking over the last four years have helped to improve quality. CM was asked to provide information on where we are, where we’re going, how we manage now and how in the future, and more detail about how cases are selected for checking. | CM |
|  | **Research and Campaigns update**  Included above. |  |
|  | **Volunteer representative’s report**  Volunteers are finding the recording of special category data onerous, and may feel it has a negative impact on clients’ experience. CM has explained how it should work but this is not widely understood. |  |
|  | **Paid Staff Representative’s report**  None |  |
|  | **Date of next meeting and prospective reports**  The AGM will take place on the 15th November 2018.  There is a doodle poll for the strategy day.  Part I ended 7.55pm | All |
|  | **Part 2 HR reports** | |