**Citizens Advice Watford - Trustee Board Meeting**

**Tuesday 3 Sept 2019, 6pm Watford Advice Centre**

**MINUTES Part 1**

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|  | Minutes PART 1 |
|  | **Standard Items** |  |
|  | **Apologies / Introductions**Stephen Herman (SH) ChairGail Tendler (GT)Fikile Mkoyana (FM)**Attended**Farrukh Siddiqi (FS) Acting ChairRoland Bedford (RB) Company SecretaryPui Wah Carter (PWC) TreasurerGeorge Derbyshire (GD) WBC representativeStephen Bolton (S Bolton) WBC representativeLaurence Blake (LB)Meera Lakhani (ML)Salim Bakirci (SB) Chief OfficerCatherine Markowski (CM) Advice Service Manager / Staff representativeGeoff Dennis (GDennis) Volunteer representativeRosie Woodhouse (minutes) |  |
|  | **Action items****Carried forward:**Funding for door guardsR&C feedbackContact deputy Mayor re move to first floor office spaceAudit provisions for managers’ account for discussion at next Herts Managers meetingProvide number of scam awareness leaflets distributed to CM**New:**Investigate how to back-up server in case of fireProvide contact from CA Chiltern to SB re server back-upFind out client satisfaction survey questions from CA and circulateCirculate figures to support extension of temporary telephone assessor contract to deliver EBDxDoodle poll for strategy day and January TB meetingCongratulate team on QAA / HTC / telephone statsCirculate R&C survey | SBAllSBSBAllSBFSSB / CMSBSBChairCM |
|  | **Conflicts of interest**There were no conflicts of interest. |  |
|  | **Minutes** 1. **Board Meeting held on 18 June 2019**

See action items above.* The possible move to the first floor offices will be discussed further following a response from the Deputy Mayor.
* ASK RE (gender violence and abuse) training has been arranged to start on 15th November (this is a requirement of the LSA). Initially this will be delivered by CitA with further sessions incorporated into gateway training in-house.
1. **Matters Arising**

The new computers have been installed to everyone’s satisfaction. Thanks were expressed to SB.The minutes were approved by the Board and signed by the Chair.  |  |
|  | **Decisions by email since last meeting** 1. **Competitor Analysis**

SB presented a chart to the meeting. Our main competitors are other regional organisations with whom in most cases we have good working relationships and work in partnership. We will work with other LCAs in Hertfordshire to manage this in a spirit of co-operation. SB compared our opening hours with other LCAs in Hertfordshire. We open for 41 hours which is less than some but most have multiple locations. We have high opening hours for a single location, and less outreach again because of our small local area. Overall our opening hours compare favourably.SB also looked the financial reports of other Hertfordshire LCAs. However, comparing ourselves to these is misleading because the comparison is not like for like due to differences in funding. Our cost per client is going down and we are the third cheapest service. Other services achieve surpluses and increasing reserves which can be difficult to justify given the huge unmet demand.1. **Business Continuity Plan**

SB presented this to the meeting. The outstanding issue is back-up of the server in case of fire. One option is cloud backup but this is expensive. The critical element is the Z drive. SB will give this further consideration and FS will give SB his contact from CA Chiltern. The board discussed the contingency plan, and considered whether this should be tested with a dry run as previously envisaged and postponed at that time. The plan for alternative premises in case of fire is still under negotiation with WBC following the demolition of the building previously identified.  | SBFS |
|  | **Assurance Items** |  |
|  | 1. **Q2 Management Accounts**

The accounts were approved and signed.1. **July/August 19 Financial report**

This shows a slight reduction in expenses and some surplus income. However the surplus is mainly due to timing, specifically quarterly funding which is received in advance. 1. **CitA’s financial dashboard**

SB presented the dashboard to the meeting. Overall this shows good reserves and cash flow, especially when compared with other LCAs.1. **Q1 PQF report**

This shows some issues with clients’ experience of using the service. This is likely to be down to access due to unmet demand. Initial check (IC) will improve the client experience. We considered bringing in training to improve customer care but decided to focus instead on increasing the number of people we are helping. It was noted that CitA are about to change the process by which they collect this data and it would be useful to have a copy of the questions asked in their survey to understand how we can improve. SB will request and circulate this.CM has visited other LCAs to learn from their practices. Some operate a different service delivery model. IC has helped, but we could consider at the strategy day whether to change the way we deliver the service. It was suggested that the small decline in client numbers reflects fewer clients but with more complex issues, and this should be included in the annual report.1. **Annual Accounts 2018/19**

The Trustees’ Report and Annual Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019 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. **Updated budget**
* Cit A have offered funding to deliver EBDx again. We will receive £5,000 for 45 appointments delivered and recorded in the approved way.
* A further £8,000 is to be added for the foodbank outreach and HTC. The board discussed whether to extend the temporary telephone gateway assessor contract for a further 6 months to include EBDx, and agreed there is no risk as the income from CA Chiltern will continue. SB will circulate the exact figures. This was agreed, pending the updated budget.
* Funding was received for the scams awareness project.

The budget was approved by the Board and signed by the Chair. | SBSB |
|  | **CA Watford KPI’s** * SB presented the report for July. The turnaway figures were higher than normal due to holidays, but increasing demand is also a factor. CM explained the measures being taken to address this – IC, no-show policy on appointment slip, taking names and phone numbers of clients returning for later gateways, flexible roles to maximise capacity. There was a discussion around how the figures are recorded. Daily reception stats record capacity, turnaways and no-shows. The council requires figures for turnaways but not numbers of client’s helped, which increased from 1500 clients last year to 1647. The focus is on reducing waiting times for appointments which will reduce no-shows.
* EU settlement scheme applications have increased – CM has written to the MP regarding the difficulties faced by people making an application.
* Telephone calls answered have increased, in particular the number of calls answered by volunteers which rose to165 last month – one of the highest on record. One factor is more simple queries. CM will celebrate this success with telephone assessors.

**KPIs for HWAS**Target figures were achieved but some other KPIs for this project were not met (see point 11). |  |
|  | **Risk Assessment**Two new risks were identified:* The lease on the premises has expired;
* The potential loss of £25,000 pa crisis intervention funding. Herts managers are looking to replace this.
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|  | **Policy and Decision Items** |  |
|  | **Policies update for review**1. Home & mobile working

**New policies (renewed by CitA) standard policies:**1. Volunteer Performance
2. Volunteer Dignity at work
3. Volunteer Complaints –(also applies to trustees)

All four policies were approved by the Board. |  |
|  | **Board Skills Matrix & Board Benchmarking**This was circulated in advance of the meeting. Comments are invited. There are further matters to explore – this will be re-evaluated in a few months’ time. |  |
|  | **Strategy Day and Strategy Day Agenda**Suggestions are invited. SB will set up a doodle poll for the date (January). | SB |
|  | **Chief Officer’s report**SB presented the report. SB explained that an incorrect funder code was allocated to HWAS cases which has now been rectified.  |  |
|  | **Service Manager’s report**The report was circulated in advance of the meeting. CM added some further items: * QAA results – we are in the green band (highest band) for both KPI 1 and KPI 2.
* CM received a call from CitA to the effect that Watford is one of the best LCAs delivering HTC. They have arranged to observe an HTC appointment to learn from our good practice.
* The figures in the report will show an improvement after the holiday period.
* We have taken on a volunteer on a student placement for three months (minimum) and will fast-track her training as a specialist consumer adviser.

The Board will pass on their congratulations to staff and volunteers on the impressive results. | Chair |
|  | **Research and Campaigns update*** We have lost some volunteer capacity due to leave but a new volunteer will start this month.
* CM will forward a survey to identify contributions made to R&C by members of the Board. This forms part of the LSA.
* We have seen an increase in Brexit-related enquiries and are training all assessors to complete training in assisting with EU settlement scheme applications. CM wrote to the MP to complain after we were advised by the Home Office to use Google Translate to assist a client with their application.
* CM explained how we identify R&C issues and how success is measured. We use Advice Information Codes (AICs) on Casebook, attend local and national R&C meetings to identify trends, then raise a call for evidence on Casebook. Success is measured by changes made, eg reducing the waiting time for UC claims from 6 weeks to five.
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|  | **Volunteer representative’s report**GD has implemented monthly social events and numbers attending are increasing. |  |
|  | **Paid Staff Representative’s report**No feedback to report. |  |
|  | **Date of next meeting and prospective reports**The AGM will take place on 14th November.SB will send doodle poll for the date of the January meeting. It was agreed the strategy day will take place before the meeting. |  SB |
|  | **Part 2 HR reports**  |  |