

# Governor Role and Election

## Virtual Members Meeting: Event Summary

On Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April the Membership Office held their second Virtual Members Meeting, this time to explain the role of a Governor and the current election process.

We were very pleased to welcome Trust colleagues to the session from both clinical and administrative backgrounds, as well as current members, governors and members of the public. The session was led by Mark Hughes, our Lead Governor and we had fellow governors, Mel Smith, James Hamilton-Andrews and Jeza Sandford talking about their experience of being a governor and their connections with the Trust through using services and being a carer.

Through the meeting we wanted to provide information to members potentially interested in taking a lead and standing for governor in the current election, so it was important that our guests heard all about the role and its importance from a current governor prospective.

Current Membership Committee Chair and Service User Governor Mel Smith gave an overview of the Council of Governors; the joint-working aspect of the governor role, and the impact it has on us as an NHS organisation. Also representing Service Users in West Sussex was James Hamilton-Andrews, describing the Governor role in further depth and highlighting the key points that help us achieve our goals. A key point made here for guests was that Governors are voluntary and their position is well-described as a 'critical friend'.

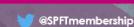
Service User Governor Jeremy Sandford then talked through the time expected to carry out a Governor role in full, highlighting that as a rule one will likely spend 1 – 2 days per month working with the Trust in this capacity, looking over documents, attending site visits and tours, as well as meetings such as the quarterly Council of Governors. James Hamilton-Andrews followed on with a description of the amount of high quality and respectful support that can be

### What is a Governor



#### A Governor is:

- Independent of the Trust and could be viewed as a critical friend
- A volunteer and does not get paid
- Someone who is keen to understand and be able to champion the needs of the community
- Someone who is able to put the needs of the community above personal preference



### Examples of achievements over the last 12 months



- Re-appointed the Chair
- Appointed Non-Executive Directors (NEDs)
- Approved the remuneration of the Chair and NEDs
- Held a successful virtual Annual Members Meeting
- Received the Annual Report and Accounts (AGM)
- Involved in the planning for the Annual Plan and breakthrough objectives
- Elected a Lead and Deputy Lead Governor
- Formed part of a project group for the East Sussex Redesign Consultation
- Developed a set of Governor Promises
- Helped develop a Governor Handbook
- Came together as a governor family to support each other during the pandemic
- Developed new ways of working and improved Council efficiency



### Who can become a governor



There are no formal qualifications required for the role, just a desire to help improve services and a passion for mental health

#### A governor will need to:

- recognise that a health service is complex with many issues to address
- actively listen and value the contributions of different people
- welcome and support fellow governors
- be enthusiastic and committed and want to work as part of a team
- be keen to learn and keep updated
- be able to ask questions in a constructive manner
- be willing to read relevant documents and papers, attend relevant meetings and training the trust will provide



expected when joining in this role, adding that he has been extremely impressed with this level of care and support ever since he started, a sentiment which was shared by the other governors in attendance.

The session focused heavily on Governors' experiences and personal journeys, which gave the group a profound understanding of what the governor role means to each person as an individual, as well as within a Council. It was important that our governors had the opportunity to tell their story and how that had led them to become a governor, their sense of pride at being part of our 'Council Family' is very important to us.

The presentation included a wonderfully touching and insightful video from Di Hickman, Service User governor representing Brighton and Hove. Di's video gave a further glimpse into her motivations and spoke about the doubts she had as a service user looking to take a more active role in the Trust before standing in the elections, the day to day work the Council gets involved with, and the impact becoming a member has had on her own wellbeing and sense of satisfaction, before signing off with a final message of support and well wishes to everyone considering standing.

Corporate Governance Manager Natalie Hennings then explained the election process in full, touching on key points such as the criteria needed to stand, nomination requirements and the accompanying forms such as personal statements. Natalie talked over the current available positions which are:

- Service User Governor, Brighton and Hove - 1 position
- Service User Governor, East Sussex - 1 position
- Service User Governor, West Sussex - 1 position
- Service User Governor, Outside of Sussex - 1 position
- Carer Governor - 1 position
- Staff Governor - 1 position

After taking questions from the group, Membership Co-Ordinator Steve Perrott informed guests how they could join if they were not already members, adding that for any membership or election queries members can email [FT@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk](mailto:FT@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk) or call on Freephone – 0800 015 3357.

More information on the election is available to our members here: [www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/election](http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/election)

**Standing as governor:** if you would like to stand as a governor, you can submit your nomination here: [www.cesvotes.com/sussexpartnership2021](http://www.cesvotes.com/sussexpartnership2021)

The Membership Office would like to take this opportunity to say a huge heartfelt thank you to everyone that was involved in this session, including members of the public, current Trust members and our Governors; all of you made this event a fantastic success and we look forward to bringing you more virtual engagement updates in the future.

Thank you for reading our Virtual Members Meeting Summary and if you are standing in the 2021 elections, good luck!