

Chairman's Note

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PAPER C

Dear Board Member,

Key considerations

Since we last met the key things on my mind have been:

- As a Board how do we ensure that our collective performance as a group provides the quality of leadership which is necessary to identify and respond to current and emerging challenges as well as making the most of the opportunities that we identify?
- As a Board how do we ensure there is an appropriate focus on research and innovation which inevitably means taking a longer term perspective whilst balancing this with a focus on the here and now issues?

Priority Items & Questions

As a Board we are aware of the challenging environment that the NHS is operating in and the pressures which this is creating for individual Trust such as ours. In preparation for our next board meeting on 4th February 2016 I would like to highlight some issues that I believe are pertinent to the first question :

- the ability of the Board to have a clear sense of direction and make decisions against a canvas of complex and interrelated challenges
- the ability of the Board to be entrepreneurial in terms of seizing potential opportunities after making considered judgements against a canvas of ambiguity and incomplete information
- the willingness of the Board to scrutinise itself in terms of assessing its own corporate governance and performance as well as asking whether it collectively has the right skills and experience amongst its membership in order to discharge its responsibilities
- the recognition within the Board that in addition to focusing on issues such as how finite resources are used to the best effect ; listening to many voices (patients and others) ; sustaining and enhancing confidence internally and externally ; there needs to be a culture of continuous improvement not just in terms of governance processes but also how we see ourselves acting as role models for other decision making forums within the organisation.

As a Board we will be considering in due course the 'well led Board' templates which are being introduced by the CQC and NHS Improvement as part of their assessment of us and other Trust Boards. However my own perception is that as a Board we should be striving to be amongst the best as an exemplar because it is the right aspiration to have and not simply because we want to pass the bar in any inspection process. We will be focusing our attention on these and other questions during various sessions in future Thinking Days.

The second issue that I have raised concerns research and innovation. The Board receives quarterly reports on the activity being undertaken within our organisation as well as the East Midlands Clinical Network for which we are the host organisation. There is of course a distinction between research activity which may have a focus on making public or publishing the results of studies and innovative projects that may need to protect intellectual property rights through patents or other means and for that reason adopt a different trajectory. What is common to both dimensions is the potential contribution they can make in terms of transformative or significant change to modern medicine and health outcomes. Such changes will not just perpetuate the status quo in terms of how health services are delivered and require change in mindsets as well as practice. I think our role as a Board is to encourage this type of future focused activity and ensure that the here and now considerations do not present unsurmountable obstacles. One of our draft priorities for the next financial year is to develop a commercial strategy in this area and we also need to work closely with our academic and other partners. We will focus on this area in one of our Thinking Days and a Learning into Action event might also be another means to bring together some of the many staff who are working so hard in this area.

I look forward to seeing you at the forthcoming Board meeting on 4th February 2016 .

Regards,
Karamjit Singh

Chairman, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust