

General Purposes Group Meeting Report – Wednesday 12th March 2025, 10.30am

Chair's Welcome and Apologies

The meeting was chaired by Ann Green, with apologies received from Chris Palmer and Johnny Hebron.

Attendees included Ann Green (Chair), Frances Dewhurst (GPG Member) and in attendance Jonathan Jelley (Acting Chair) Jess Slater (CEO), and Carole Rose (Head of Administration and Finance).

Approval of Previous Meeting Notes

The notes from the previous meeting 14 January 2025 were agreed upon, with all actions completed. Ann noted the improved oversight of policies.

Action: Jess to include a statement in the HR report confirming that 'HR Matters' has reviewed and updated policies to align with legislation.

HR Update & Policies

Jess provided an update on organisational restructuring. A new Partnership Board Assistant started on 11 March, with the role adapted to strengthen engagement in Peterborough and Fenland. Recruitment is ongoing for a part time Minute Taker, full time Data and Impact Officer, and part time Information Officer. The organisation now has 17 individual staff roles, with part-time roles contributing to cost savings.

To improve clarity in roles and responsibilities, job titles have been revised.

Frances raised concerns about the safeguarding policies, and Jess confirmed they have been reviewed by 'HR Your Business Matters.' A staff refresher on safeguarding policies was suggested.

Frances also recommended clearer wording in the whistleblowing policy to specify that illegal acts will be reported to the police. Discussion followed regarding communication channels and defining incompetence within whistleblowing. Ann and Jess stressed the importance of a strong Chair-CEO relationship and effective probationary processes.

Actions:

- Jess to update policies based on discussions and circulate revised versions to the General Purposes Group (GPG).
- Policies to include headers with the organisation's logo and footers with the author's name.

Finance Update (End of February 2025)

Jess presented financial figures, highlighting a surplus of over £40,000. She outlined the financial impact of restructuring and the importance of sustainability. Ann and Jonathan acknowledged the positive financial position and encouraged continued efforts.

Budget 2025-2026

Jess noted that external funding increases from local authorities had not yet been confirmed. She stated the increase in the marketing budget to enhance visibility, including a potential pop-up shop trial in Fenland to improve engagement.

Following an assessment of potential locations, the Senior Management Team concluded that hiring pop-up spaces would be more cost effective and equitable than securing a permanent high street presence. Frances shared insights from repair cafes, suggesting the concept could boost engagement.

Action: Frances to provide Jess with recommendations for potential pop-up shop locations in Cambridge.

The GPG approved the budget, including a planned deficit covered by savings from the current year.

Risk Register Review

Cybersecurity training has been purchased and is being rolled out for staff. Devolution has been added as an amber risk, with discussions on the potential for Healthwatch England to become the commissioner, raising issues about independence and funding.

Frances highlighted the need for more Non-Executive Directors (NEDs), particularly those with availability. Jonathan has identified a potential candidate with expertise in quality assurance and patient experience.

Action: Recruitment of NEDs to be added to the risk register.

Any Other Business

Jess proposed adding additional signatories to the bank accounts to ensure continuity in administrative processes. Frances supported the proposal and suggested Jonathan as a signatory on another account, with Carole as an administrator for information access.

Jonathan announced that his role as Acting Chair has been extended by two months to support Stewart's recovery, with a review planned for May. During this time, he will focus on stakeholder engagement to enhance Healthwatch's profile following the new strategy's approval.

Actions:

- Jess to approach a NED about becoming a bank signatory.
- Carole to be added as an admin on the bank accounts for information access.

Meeting closed at 12.00pm