

Paper 1: Minutes, Healthwatch Rutland (HWR) Board Meeting in Public

8 September 2025

Present: Janet Underwood (Chair)(JU), Alan Walters, Jane MacDonald

Apologies: Samantha Fraser

In attendance: Tracey Allan-Jones (TA-J)

		Action
1	Welcome Apologies were received from Samantha Fraser.	
2	Declarations of Interest None were declared.	
3	Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes from the June board meeting in public were agreed as a true record. Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The offer of employment for a new HW Engagement Officer had not been taken up and the post would be re-advertised as a fixed term contract for 12 months (action closed) - The action for board members to create biographies for the HWR website was not complete, a reminder was given to forward to TA-J. 	
5	Updates Integrated Care Board (ICB) JU updated on the new ICB governance and executive team structure. There is little detail on how the patient voice will be brought in now that HW Leicester/Leicestershire and HWR have been asked to stand down from their seats. From now on the ICB meetings will be in person, alternating between venues in Northants and LLR. JU sought the board's direction on whether to raise the issue of HW representation on the ICB at the next Health and Wellbeing Board. It was agreed that this was inappropriate as it was not an agenda item or an emergency item. No monies from Government have yet been identified for the ICB redundancies to help achieve the 32% LLR ICB cost saving, so that process cannot start yet.	

	<p>Annual Meeting planning</p> <p>TA-J advised that an invitation had been sent to the ICB CEO to attend to speak about commissioning changes and the implications of the 10-year Health Plan. Rachna Vyas, Deputy CEO has confirmed her attendance. It was agreed that an invitation would be sent to the local authority Director of Adult Social Care to invite a speaker on neighbourhood health planning. The high-level comms on the annual meeting would begin in mid-September on the HWR website, in the September newsletter and in social media. AW was keen to ensure that we use simple language in the communications, which was duly noted.</p> <p>Action, TA-J to draft the invitation for JU to send to RCC and produce comms to invite public attendance</p>	TA-J
6	<p>Dismantling of Healthwatch and campaign to preserve independent local voice in health and care</p> <p>TA-J presented a short overview of information received so far on local Healthwatch closure, how the national campaign was coming together and to gain agreement to HWR's involvement (paper 2).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) had confirmed with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) that HW funding for 2025-26 was secured and that the award for 26-27 would be communicated to local authorities soon. - Local authorities are required to continue to commission local HW until the law changes (expected in early 2027). - Louise Ansari, Chief Exec of HWE had accepted a Non-Executive Directorship (NED) on the board of NHSE, which may cause some conflict of interest with her role at HWE. - No response had been received as yet to the open letter sent by local HW leaders to Wes Streeting. - Various Early Day motions had been submitted by MPs. HWR had drawn these to the attention of Alicia Kearns but she does not endorse such motions as a point of policy. - TA-J research on local HW ability to spend time campaigning revealed that regulation 36 ¹ allows this activity as long as it can be shown to be incidental. <p><i>Discussion points:</i></p> <p>It was agreed that HWR should support the campaign, localising template communications where possible to minimise staff overhead.</p>	

¹ The NHS Bodies and Local Authorities (Partnership Arrangements, Care Trusts, Public Health and Local Healthwatch) Regulations 2012¹ is the document that governs the operation of Healthwatch and 'Part 6 Local Healthwatch' defines the regulatory framework in which we operate. Regulation 36 specifically pertains to the boundaries for Healthwatch campaigning and political involvement.

	<p>Discussion ensued on the value of trying to further involve the MP, Alicia Kearns and it was agreed that an in-person meeting with JU should be considered when the petition gets its government response. A press statement could be pulled together around this to send to Nub news and the Rutland Times.</p> <p>JM suggested that Louise Ansari's appointment as an NHSE NED could help defend the independence of the patient voice.</p> <p>JU was keen to bring the closure of local Healthwatch to Scrutiny and AW voiced caution. The danger is the committees (local or joint) would simply note the situation. With little concrete information about the closure and what happens next, it was not clear what the HWR ask of the committees would be. It was agreed therefore to defer this for the time being and seek permission to have agenda items when more detail is available.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <p>TA-J: Update the work plan to reflect the campaign activity.</p> <p>TA-J: Draft a paper for Rutland Scrutiny when more detail on closure is available.</p> <p>JU: Document how Rutland people value having independent place to give their feedback due to distrust of, or repercussions from, health and care providers.</p> <p>JU/TA-J Approach Alicia Kearns for a meeting when the Government responds to the petition.</p>	<p>TA-J</p> <p>TA-J</p> <p>JU</p> <p>JU/TA-J</p>
7.	<p>HWR Manager report</p> <p>The paper was taken as read.</p> <p>Item noted by the board</p> <p><i>Unlocking the power of people-driven care: HWR Annual Report paper</i></p>	
8	<p>Questions from the public</p> <p>No questions were received.</p>	
9	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>JU mentioned she had received request from the Transferring Care Safely team for HWR to contribute an article for a newsletter. As HWR has no detail on the purpose or audience of the newsletter it was decided that we should not contribute at this time.</p> <p>Action: JU to ask for details at the next TCS meeting with a view to us contributing to a future edition.</p>	JU
10	<p>Next meeting</p> <p>December 1 online via Teams 6.30-8pm</p>	