



Minutes of the 97th Council meeting of the Patient and Client held on 14th March 2023

Open session 10:40am – 1:00pm

Present:

Ms Stephen Mathews (Chair)
Mr Alan Hanna
Mr Paul Douglas
Mr Patrick Farry
Mr Tom Irvine
Cllr Martin Reilly

In Attendance:

Ms Vivian McConvey, Chief Executive, PCC
Ms Meadhbha Monaghan, Head of Operations PCC
Mrs Carol Collins, PCC, Business Manager
Ms Clare McGlone, PCC, Executive Assistant

Apologies:

Ms Linda Craig, PHA

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Ms Linda Craig (PHA).

The Chair offered a formal welcome to Ms Monaghan as new Chief Executive of PCC and the transition to new Chief Executive would be discussed under point 5.

2. Minutes of last meeting held on 15th November 2022 and Matters Arising

Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 15th November.

All matters had been attended to however one action from the previous meeting had been left off the matters arising document. Ms McConvey would contact Mr Nichol to arrange a Council Workshop for October 2023.

The timetable for 2023-2024 had been circulated ahead of the Council meeting and added to the agenda to be approved.

The Partnership Agreement had been discussed at the previous meeting and sent to DOH. Ms McConvey had this on the agenda for the Bi-Monthly meeting with Sponsor branch on 16th March 2023.

The Corporate Witness statement had been discussed in the closed session.

ACTION: Ms McConvey would contact Mr Nichol regarding attending a Council Workshop.

3. Declaration of Interests

The Chair confirmed he had been appointed as an Equality Commissioner. He had previously been on the Board of the Equality Commission and had been reappointed. Ms McConvey asked Council members to complete their Declaration of Interest before year end.

4. Chair's Update

The Chair advised that his term as Interim Chair was extended until 31 May 2023. The Executive Management team were working on the Chief Executive Transition and Ms McConvey would update further on this. Work was going on in the background filling posts and on the PCC Connect event.

5. Chief Executive's update

Chief Executive transition

Ms McConvey had been working with Ms Monaghan on the Chief Executive transition.

Ms Collins had spoken to the new Band 7 Business Support Manager who would be starting in the next few months. Ms McConvey advised that the receptionist had resigned and Ms Collins was working on a replacement. Ms McConvey was working with Ms Collins on her new role as Head of Business Support.

As part of the transition, Ms Monaghan was attending meetings with Ms McConvey and had started a handover of casework. Ms Monaghan advised she had met with service managers and the new service manager due to start in April 2023. There would be a gap in staffing with Ms Barry resigning and the Head of Operations role currently being vacant. Ms Monaghan had discussed with the Service managers the need to understand their responsibilities with the gap in staffing. The Leadership team were keen to assist which Ms Monaghan found encouraging. Ms McConvey confirmed they had been paying attention to priorities such as the annual report, transition of Chief Executive and MAHI.

The Chair queried if there had been an update on the staffing changes within Sponsor Branch. Ms Monaghan understood that Mr Webb was in post and transitioning into his role however was unsure if he would be attending the Bi Monthly meeting on 16th March.

Ms McConvey and the Chair had received response from the Permanent Secretary regarding Ms Monaghan's appointment and this was very positive.

Cllr Reilly thanked everyone for their update before temporarily leaving the meeting at 10:55am.

6. Positive Passporting event

Ms Doherty-Reilly joined the meeting at 10:55am and shared her presentation on screen. Ms Doherty-Reilly provided an update on positive passporting, the concept of this and how this linked in with the PCC Connect event planned for 19th April 2023.

Ms McConvey thanked Ms Doherty-Reilly for her work on this. The Chair agreed this was very informative and encapsulated the journey of the PCC. Mr Irvine queried if the goal was to connect with every organisation in Northern Ireland as this was a very wide spectrum, and queried if PCC had the resources. Ms McConvey highlighted as a regional organisation, the PCC needed to understand the directory of organisations available and PCC were trying to become better at answering people's problems. The Chair agreed that Mr Irvine had a valid point and PCC were hoping to maximise the benefit of resources that were out there. Ms Monaghan advised that PCC were targeting other advocacy organisations and this was the first step in the strategic direction they wanted to take. Mr Hanna queried if there was a criteria or priority list. Ms Monaghan had looked at areas of work around disability and section 75 groups, and going forward would take a more analytical approach with the policy and impact team. A MOU would be created to cover connections to any organisation. The PCC Connect event would be a celebration of what PCC have come to and where it would be going. A section of this would be based on organisations networking. The Chair thanked Ms Doherty-Reilly for the detail included.

Ms Doherty-Reilly left the meeting at 11.15am.

7. Coproduction Associate Model

Ms Murray joined the meeting at 11.15am and shared her presentation on the Co-Production model. Ms Murray provided an overview of the planned outputs and the timeframe for these, the challenges, the risks associated and the next steps for the project.

The Chair thanked Ms Murray for her presentation and agreed that payment for experience is a challenge in many sectors. Mr Irvine queried how much of a delay there was. Ms Murray advised that operationally the project was ready, but was in discussion and negotiation at the moment to ensure all stakeholders understood the risk in terms of employment status. Ms Monaghan highlighted that there was risk around the paid remuneration model for user experience and Ms Murray was trying to mitigate the risk of individuals querying if their work was actually paid employment and looking at the impact of tax. Mr Farry suggested to mitigate risk, to treat everyone as employees. Mr Douglas had read the document circulated with papers and wasn't sure where PCC were with this issue, Mr Douglas understood Mr Farry's opinion if someone is being paid to help PCC, they are an employee.

Ms Murray was trying to keep people independent of the PCCC but have a support package in place. Mr Douglas queried the overall cost to the organisation and if this would grow. Ms Monaghan had put together a budget for this and a long-term goal of the PCC would be to have this in place and seek funding from other organisations to meet the cost of remuneration. Mr Farry supported the concept of paying but depending on people receiving this to report it to tax authorities which may put a burden on them, more so than if they were on payroll. Ms Murray advised this was the simplest approach and was a way to diversify service users. It was also a way of respecting peoples time and remunerating for this. It would increase risk to the organisation and needed to decide if this was the right approach.

The Chair advised a decision was needed but the Council didn't seem ready to make a definitive decision as guidance was required from DLS on the best way to approach this. Ms Monaghan and Ms Murray would be meeting the following week to discuss further and would come back to council with a paper on the pros and cons, based on

discussions. Ms McConvey didn't want to lose sight of the phenomenal work Ms Murray had done. Ms McConvey advised that this should move forward as there were experienced people who should be remunerated.

Mr Hanna advised that this was presented to Business Committee a few months ago and was very impressed with the work done and had suggested there were organisations who would manage direct payments. Mr Hanna shared Mr Farry's concern about how this would be interpreted however wanted this to work as Ms Murray had completed amazing work and answered Council questions.

The Chair recognised the extraordinary work taken to bring the model to this stage. In principal the Council were committed to bringing this forward but needed assurance of the risks associated. Ms McConvey noted that Ms Murray could still move forward with the pilot programme and PCC was now an accredited centre thanks to Ms Murray.

Ms Murray left the meeting at 11:55am.

Cllr Reilly re-joined the meeting at 11:40am.

8. ARAC

This section of the agenda was brought forward.

Mr Farry confirmed that minutes from 18th October 2022 were discussed at the previous meeting and approved by Council members.

ARAC met on 28th February 2023 and during this meeting the SODA was approved, members met with internal and external audit and agreed the process, the budget and matters pertaining to conduct of external audit, which tied in with the timetable sent by Ms McGlone. Internal audit presented two papers; the financial review which received a satisfactory and engagement audit which was limited. Comments made by internal audit were not unexpected and accepted by the committee. Mr Irvine and Mr Farry had queried if the limited in the engagement Audit would impact overall report for year end. Although Mr Charles could not give a guarantee members were confident it would not be impacted. MR Farry provided an overview of items deferred to the following meeting including the DAC register. ARAC members spent time going through the evolving Risk Register and how it was presented. Mr Farry thanked Ms Monaghan for the enormous work carried out on the Risk Register and its presentation. Mr Farry noted that there was interesting commentary on local risk registers. Ms Mitchell who was an important advisor to ARAC suggested that ARAC needed to be aware of the overall risk without being burdened with the detail on risk register but would bring a local risk register to ARAC each quarter.

Mr Irvine highlighted that an important piece of information was the Engagement Audit being the first in a while so there was learning for both PCC and audit and they were confident this would not impact overall outcome; however, this decision was with Ms McKeown. PCC had accepted all recommendations and audit would check in six months for an update on these recommendations. Ms Collins had reviewed the tracker and updated the progress made on recommendations, Ms Collins was confident PCC would be in a good position going into next year. Ms Monaghan provided an update on the Risk Register and had taken forward changes based on recommendations from Internal audit. Ms Monaghan found the discussion interesting and would explore further with Mr Charles. In terms of Local Risk Registers, given that these were

evolving it would be useful to bring to Council each quarter so they had a sense of the changes.

ACTIONS: A local Risk register would be presented to Council quarterly.

Cllr Reilly left the meeting at 12noon.

9. Finance

Ms Collins shared the Financial Management Report and in the interest of time would present Paper 690.

Ms Collins highlighted the opening balance for month 10 being considerably more. Ms Collins drew attention to table 5, PCC was sitting in a favourable position mainly to do with pay income and staff not being in post. Ms Collins had spoken to Sponsor Branch about a possible easement. Ms Collins assured Council members that PCC were working on ensuring everything was accounted for and would break even by year end, which was a brilliant position to be in. Ms Collins confirmed work had been completed to reduce the use of agency staff.

Ms Collins noted that having spoken to the Management accountant, they needed to go through Month 11 and there was a possible £15k surplus at year end.

Mr Irvine thanked Ms Collins and team for their fantastic work after receiving criticism for the number of agency staff. Ms Collins thanked Mr Irvine and highlighted that Ms McConvey had worked on pushing this forward which wasn't easy. It had been a long process getting people into permanent contracts and thanked the council for recognising this. Mr Farry queried if the £15k surplus was within the 0.2% required. Ms Collins confirmed this was and it was continuously monitored.

The Chair added that having continuity of employment gives a level of certainty and they had worked hard to get this over the line.

Mr Farry left the meeting at 12:15pm.

10. Business Committee

Mr Hanna provided an update on the Business Committee and advised he had nothing to report as a meeting hadn't been held since the last Council meeting. Ms Collins would be covering some items in the next section of the agenda that would be presented at Business Committee.

11. Business Support/Governance

Ms Collins shared her report and welcomed feedback. Ms Collins would focus on SARs as Assembly questions and FOI requests were similar to last year and generic.

Ms Collins advised the number of SARs had increased over the past year, with 11 being received this year to date. At this time last year, three had been received. Some of the SARs were easily fulfilled however some were more complex and there was increased time spent on these. Ms Collins advised she was looking at key areas of learning and this would feed into the Corporate Risk Register's new risk of PCC being a learning organisation. Ms Collins would look at what people were asking for and if anything could have been done differently or if it could be prevented.

Mr Reilly re-joined the meeting at 12:30pm.

Complaints

Ms Collins confirmed eight complaints compared to three last year. Five of these were complex and about the handling of cases with some of these ongoing. PCC had engaged an external consultant from the HSC leadership centre. This was working well for PCC as they had identified work that could be done differently and this fed into the service improvement tracker. Some individuals had provided invaluable feedback on how PCC could do things differently and PCC had taken this on board. They would continue working with the associate as they had produced a report which would help make further improvements. The need for a clearer and comprehensive complaints policy was identified and managing expectations would be included in this. PCC needed to make clear what they could and could not do. Ms Collins would update Council when this policy was in place.

The Chair agreed this was a great use of the Associate model and harnessing expertise. The Chair thanked Ms Collins for her work on this and the paper provided was very helpful for Council.

Corporate Risk Register

Ms Collins would focus on the Risk register summary report and thanked Ms Monaghan for her work in her absence. There was work ongoing with the support of Ms Taylor and Internal Audit's input.

The previous risk register had 11 risks, however there were now eight with the risks removed either not being applicable or de-escalated to local risk registers. Ms Collins provided an overview of the risks added. Mr Irvine queried if Risk 8 had been agreed as a reputational risk. Ms Collins advised it was to be discussed and a decision hadn't been made yet. The Chair agreed this was a work in progress and the key thing was to take corrective and remedial action to mitigate risks. It was important to be clear on actions associated and would be important to focus on the risk register when it has been developed.

Ms Monaghan advised that regarding risk 8 they were trying to capture the risk of PCC not being seen as a learning organisation. This had been discussed at ARAC and Mr Irvine had suggested the name change.

The Chair thanked Ms Monaghan, Ms Collins for their work and ARAC for their input.

12. Timetable 2023/24

Members approved the timetable.

13. AOB

Mr Irvine thanked the Chair for keeping the meeting on track. The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution and he was looking forward to the future with optimism.

14. Close

The Chair closed the meeting at 12:45pm

Signed:



Date: 9th May 2023

Mr Stephen Mathews