**National Institute for Health and Care Excellence**

Senior Management Team

# Minutes of the meeting held on 5 May 2020

## Present

Gill Leng Chief Executive

Meindert Boysen Director – Centre for Health Technology Evaluation

Paul Chrisp Director – Centre for Guidelines

Jane Gizbert Director – Communications

Judith Richardson Acting Director – Health and Social Care

Alexia Tonnel Director – Evidence Resources

Catherine Wilkinson Acting Director – Business Planning and Resources

## In attendance

David Coombs Associate Director – Corporate Office (minutes)

Nick Crabb Programme Director – Science Advice and Research

Martin Davison Acting Associate Director – Finance (items 6.4 and 6.5)

Lori Farrar Senior Manager – Horizon Scanning, Topic Selection and Scoping, Centre for Health Technology Evaluation (item 6.2)

Pall Jonsson Associate Director – Science Policy and Research (item 6.1)

Danielle Mason Associate Director – Brand and Marketing Communications (item 6.6)

## Apologies (item 1)

1. None.

## Declarations of interest (item 2)

1. The previously declared interests were noted. There were no conflicts of interest relevant to the meeting.

## Notes of the previous meeting (item 3)

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2020 were agreed as a correct record subject to adding Sebastian Maycock to the attendance record for item 10.

## Matters arising (item 4)

1. The actions from the meeting held on 28 April 2020 were noted as complete or in hand.
2. SMT discussed the arrangements for the Board meetings on 20 May. It was agreed to ask a member of the field team to update the morning session on how NICE’s COVID-19 guidance has been used on the front-line, along with any other relevant feedback. It was agreed to seek an external speaker for the morning session of the Board meeting in July, with directors asked to consider potential invitees.

ACTION: SMT

1. SMT discussed the logistics for handling questions from the public at the afternoon session on 20 May. It was agreed that it would be helpful for a member of NICE staff to oversee the questions submitted via Zoom and read these out for the Board to answer. Judith Richardson and Jane Gizbert were asked to identify a member of the field team or communications team to undertake this role and ensure the Chair has a briefing on how this aspect of the meeting will operate.

ACTION: JG/JR/DC

## Coronavirus (item 5)

1. SMT confirmed the following decisions taken at the gold group:
* Plan for all advisory committees to be held virtually, at least up until April 2021. This will be kept under review, but will ensure business continuity, even if there is a second wave of the pandemic. Committees will begin to restart in line with key priorities from 1 June 2020.
* Staff to continue working from home while strict social distancing measures are in place following the lockdown, as working in the office will be very challenging in this environment. This is likely to be in place for at least the next 3 months but will be kept under review in line with Government guidance.
* Travel during this 3 month period to be limited to only that which is deemed business critical, and there will be no international travel. Any staff attending business critical meetings at third party premises should check that guidance on social distancing is being followed.
* Restrictions on publishing to be lifted from 1 June 2020 in line with the resumption of normal services across the NHS. The communications team will lead on a process of identifying the order that guidance should be published in conjunction with Centre directors.

## Science policy and research programme strategy review (item 6.1)

1. Nick Crabb presented the updated priorities for the science policy and research programme. It is proposed these are used to guide the programme’s work for 12 months, to allow review by the new Director of Science, Evidence and Analytics once they are in post.
2. SMT discussed the proposed priorities and noted the importance of ensuring appropriate linkages with relevant activities across NICE, including methods and economics work in the Centre for Guidelines and the Audience Insight team in the Communications Directorate.
3. SMT supported the proposed updated priorities subject to ensuring sufficient focus on guidelines, in particular as part of the NICE Connect priority area. It was suggested that issues around the handling of uncertainty/risk and the approach to ultra-orphan conditions are considered under the priority areas of ‘adaptive pathways’ and ‘developments that challenge current methods’ respectively.

ACTION: NC

1. SMT referred to their previous discussions around the Citizens Council. Nick noted that the actions previously agreed by SMT around standing down the Council and considering options for a replacement had not taken place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SMT agreed that Nick should convene a meeting with Paul Chrisp and Meindert Boysen to discuss future options for the Citizens Council in line with the previous SMT discussion, with the aim of bring a paper to the Board in August.

ACTION: NC

1. SMT highlighted the importance of ensuring the outputs from the research are used within NICE. Gill Leng asked that a visual figure is developed to demonstrate how the research agenda supports guidance developing centres and methodological developments.

ACTION: NC

## Centre for Health Technology Evaluation (CHTE) topic selection: change to formal referral process (item 6.2)

1. Meindert Boysen presented the proposed changes to the current formal referral process for Technology Appraisal (TA) and Highly Specialised Technologies (HST) assessments, following the paper considered by the Board in March regarding the topic selection process in CHTE. The changes will allow the programme to more quickly recover from the COVID-19 disruption and are consistent with the already established process for cancer technologies.
2. SMT agreed the proposals in the paper to implement 'auto-referrals' from the Department of Health and Social Care for all TA and HST assessments, and no longer hold TA and HST decision point 3 and decision point 4 meetings.
3. Jane Gizbert noted the standardisation of terminology and documentation agreed as part of the paper to the Board in March, and highlighted the implications for communications. It was agreed that Jane would liaise with colleagues in CHTE to confirm the action required to implement these changes.

ACTION: JG/MB

## Collaboration with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) (item 6.3)

1. Nick Crabb presented the proposed paper to the May public Board meeting on the terms of reference, membership and initial priorities of a core strategic group to take forward collaboration between NICE and the MHRA. He noted that the MHRA Board has received the report and given positive feedback.
2. SMT reviewed the report and supported the proposals. It was agreed that the covering paper for the NICE Board should note NICE’s and the MHRA’s distinct roles; that the proposals seek to align processes between the separate organisations; and there is an existing partnership agreement in place which will be reviewed shortly. It was agreed that the cover paper should also note that while the MHRA has a UK-wide remit, NICE is officially an England-only body and there may therefore be scope to engage the devolved administrations in this work.

ACTION: NC

1. SMT discussed the broader engagement between NICE and the MHRA, and noted this would be reflected in the upcoming review of the partnership agreement. It was agreed that it in the interim, engagement with the MHRA should be included in NICE’s strategic engagement plan and the scope for including the MHRA in the new topic selection oversight panel should be explored.

ACTION: JR/MB

## Resources report (item 6.4)

1. Catherine Wilkinson presented the proposed report to the May public Board meeting that provided an update on the 2019/20 financial position and the potential impact of COVID-19 on the 2020/21 budget, plus an update on workforce issues. Catherine highlighted that the reasonable worst case and worst-case scenarios in 2020/21 have been updated in response to the Board discussion on 22 April, and there remains significant uncertainty about the financial position both in terms of income and expenditure.
2. SMT reviewed the report and in particular the updated financial plans for 2020/21. SMT discussed the uncertainty around recruitment and vacancies, and the impact of vacancies on the level of income generated by the TA/HST programmes. It was agreed that the COVID-19 gold group should discuss further a strategic approach to recruitment in the context of the ongoing remote working, the forecast deficit in 2020/21, and the need to ensure sufficient capacity within the TA/HST programmes. SMT agreed the forecast pay underspend in the report and business plan was appropriate, but the commentary in the report should be refined to clarify the uncertainty about the impact of COVID-19 on recruitment and turnover.

ACTION: CW

1. SMT reviewed the report and agreed it for submission to the May Board meeting subject to the above amendment, minor drafting changes, and adding a summary of the key issues around the financial position in 2020/21.

ACTION: CW

## Financial accounting performance (item 6.5)

1. Catherine Wilkinson presented the report that set out the financial accounting performance, including payments, debt recovery, write offs, and losses to 31 March 2020. The report was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) on 22 April, and in future it is proposed to bring these quarterly reports to SMT prior to the ARC. Catherine stated that as the financial position becomes more challenging, it will be important for the SMT to keep an overview of income, debts, and the balance sheet position.
2. In response to a question from SMT, Catherine clarified that the reduced performance against the Better Payments Practice Code (BPPC) in the summer reflects delays in securing approval for invoices while authorised signatories are on leave. It was agreed that it would be helpful to note this in future reports, together with the mitigations, which include designating deputies able to sign-off invoices during leave.

ACTION: CW

1. SMT noted the report and agreed to share the information on the BPPC with programme directors.

ACTION: SMT

## The NICE annual conference (item 6.6)

1. Dani Mason presented the paper that asked SMT to consider how to proceed with the NICE annual conference that is currently scheduled for 11 November 2020.
2. Gill Leng stated that she has discussed the issue with the incoming Chair, who would prefer to wait before NICE decides whether to cancel the conference. SMT noted this would be in line with Government advice and therefore agreed to hold off making a decision on the event and keep the position under review until the position with social distancing is clearer. It was agreed that Dani should discuss the issue with the conference organisers and confirm they would not actively market the event during the current COVID-19 restrictions and also seek their feedback on the approach taken by other conferences. SMT supported exploring the scope for a series of virtual events, including the shared learning awards. SMT noted that the current contract with the conference organisers is due to end after the 2020 conference and agreed to delay procurement for a new contract in light of the uncertainty around the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and review the approach to future events in September.

ACTION: DM

## Strategic planning – SMT virtual retreat (item 6.7)

1. SMT discussed and supported the updated draft agenda for SMT’s ‘virtual retreat’ on 11 and 12 May. It was agreed that directors would send any further feedback and suggestions to Gill Leng who would finalise the agenda.

ACTION: SMT

1. It was agreed that Alexia Tonnel would explore the scope to utilise the ‘whiteboard’ functionality within Zoom.

ACTION: AT

## EU exit (item 7)

1. No further update.

## NICE Connect (item 8)

1. Alexia Tonnel noted the session yesterday in which CapGemini briefed senior staff across NICE on their recommendations on the digital workplace. A business case setting out how to take forward the recommendations and in what priority will be developed. Alexia stated that she would bring a summary of the recommendations and the next steps to SMT.

ACTION: AT

## London office move (item 9)

1. No further update.

## Any other business (item 10)

1. None.