**National Institute for Health and Care Excellence**

Executive Team

# Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021

## Present

Gill Leng Chief Executive (present until item 12)

Meindert Boysen Director – Centre for Health Technology Evaluation (chaired the meeting from item 12)

Paul Chrisp Director – Centre for Guidelines

Jane Gizbert Director – Communications

Felix Greaves Director – Science, Evidence and Analytics

Jennifer Howells Director – Finance, Strategy and Transformation

Judith Richardson Acting Director – Health and Social Care

Alexia Tonnel Director – Digital, Information and Technology

## In attendance

Rebecca Threlfall Chief of Staff

Alice Murray Technical Analyst – Science Policy & Research (item 8)

Rosie Lovett Senior Scientific Adviser - Science Policy & Research (item 8)

Lynn Copp SCW Consultants (item 9)

Catherine Thomas SCW Consultants (item 9)

Jenniffer Prescott Programme Director – Process and Operation, CHTE (item 11)

Lee Dobson Programme Manager – Medical Technologies Evaluation (item 11)

Elaine Repton Corporate Governance and Risk Manager (minutes)

## Apologies (item 1)

1. There were no apologies for absence.

## Declarations of interest (item 2)

1. The previously declared interests were noted.

## Notes of the previous meeting (item 3)

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

## Matters arising (item 4)

1. The actions from the meeting held on 5 January 2021 were noted as complete or in hand.
2. Felix Greaves sought ET’s view on a potential opportunity for NICE to join a bid with Imperial College to support some AI work. It was agreed that Felix arrange a separate meeting with Jennifer Howells and Alexia Tonnel to discuss the detail further.

**ACTION: FG**

## Hot topics (item 5)

1. **Staff morale and capacity** - The ET discussed the general feedback Directors are receiving from their teams that staff morale is low due to workload pressures and capacity issues from staff sickness and/or caring responsibilities, and that these feelings are being exacerbated by uncertainty about the new strategic plan and the organisational design review work. Jennifer Howells was requested to ask the HR Team to explore ideas for keeping staff engaged and motivated during the difficult months ahead.

**ACTION: JH**

1. The ET recognised that this was a very challenging time for NICE as well as the wider health and care system and was in agreement that work should be re-prioritised over the next 2 – 3 months but not stopped as it had been in March 2020. Directors were asked to have discussions with their senior teams to agree what was strategically important to deliver and what was less of a priority. It was agreed to use the informal ET meeting on Thursday as a further Gold Group for Directors to feedback on discussions with their teams and share proposals for changes they may need to make.

**ACTION: ALL**

1. In relation to guidance production specifically and being sensitive to the current environment, Paul Chrisp suggested a nuanced approach to look at what is already committed and can be progressed to Guidance Executive, then take a view on other work as to whether to publish or delay as some guidance will not gain traction, and for those that are published, to have a ‘soft’ launch. It was agreed that the committees which are ‘clinician heavy’ could be cancelled if members are unable to attend, but whole programmes are not to be paused.
2. The ET agreed that the work of Field Team and Quality Standards Team should be paused and the staff redeployed to support other areas of work. It was also agreed that the Quality Standards Advisory Committee (QSAC) and the Indicator Advisory Committee (IAC) meetings should be paused. Judith Richardson agreed to speak with the teams and the committee chair.

**ACTION: JR**

1. **Support for the vaccination programme** – The ET discussed requests from staff to volunteer to support the vaccine roll out however the change in skills required by NHSE meant that most would not be applicable, but they were free to volunteer in their own time. This will be discussed further at the next Gold Group. NHSE had requested the secondment of Monica Desai, Public Health consultant which was agreed subject to capacity.

**ACTION**: **PC**

1. **Staff engagement with the Strategic plan** – The ET discussed when and how to begin socialising the strategic plan with the wider staff group below PD & AD level to get their input and involvement. It was agreed that a proposal for an internal communication plan to take this forward should come back to ET next Tuesday for review.

**ACTION: JH/JG**

## Corporate risk register (item 6)

1. The ET reviewed updates to the corporate risk register and agreed the following amendments before it is shared with the Audit and Risk Committee:
* Risks 22/20 and 04/20 to be merged.
* Risk 32/20 –increase the target score from 4 to 6 (red) in light of current workload and staffing pressures.
* Risk 13 – add into the risk the digital and technology resources required to support the transformation projects.
* Risk 15 – the wording of the risk to be amended to reflect the potential loss of capital from DHSC due to the delay in securing the AV/VC equipment, and also that the network solutions developed by CQC are not optimal for NICE and create additional work for the NICE IT team.

**ACTION: ER**

1. The issues currently of most concern to ET to be raised with the Audit and Risk Committee were staff morale, capacity and availability, impacted by the pandemic and school closures, and exacerbated by the uncertainty staff are feeling in relation to the changes within the strategic plan and transformation programme.

**ACTION: GL**

## Internal audit report – contract management and Capgemini (item 7)

1. Alexia Tonnel presented the findings of the internal audit review of contract management arrangements which focussed on the call-off contract with Capgemini. ET was asked to review and approve the management response and actions.
2. ET noted the positive comments in the report about NICE’s management of the contract and agreed there were some general improvements recommended which would be helpful for all future call-off contracts. Jennifer Howells agreed the report would be useful for the proposed commercial team in her directorate.
3. It was agreed that recommendation 6 relating to undertaking a high-level cost comparison of the Capgemini contract with the likely costs of an alternative means of provision (ie via a traditional tender exercise), should be re-visited with the audit team as a piece of work has already been completed by Civica which provided an independent review. Alexia agreed to discuss this action with the internal auditor to have it removed.

**ACTION: AT**

## Open Access Publishing (item 8)

1. Felix Greaves requested the ET to consider adopting a ‘gold’ open access publishing policy for NICE internally funded work, in line with the Government’s commitment to make all publicly funded scientific research freely available for everyone to read. The annual cost was approx. £33k to be included in the Science, Evidence and Analytics budget and reviewed after year one.
2. The ET supported the proposal on the basis that: for externally funded projects, staff should ensure that funding for open access is included in the grant application; NICE would only fund articles where NICE is the lead author; and funded work should benefit NICE and the wider health system, rather than an individual’s personal interests.
3. The ET asked Felix to look at which journals NICE should support and Alice Murray agreed to work with the internal comms team to share the new policy as a positive news story.

**ACTION: FG/AM**

## Organisational design review: design criteria (item 9)

1. Lynne Copp and Catherine Thomas joined the meeting to provide a progress update and shared the high level themes from their initial observations. The next stage was to ask ET to begin defining the design criteria. SCW have a survey for ET members to complete to give their views on which elements of the current structure really matter to them. The proposal was for SCW to collate the results and present them back to ET on 19 January with the aim of reaching a consensus on a maximum of six criteria in a priority order, which SCW will then benchmark.

**ACTION: ALL**

## Draft strategic plan (item 10)

1. The next iteration of the strategic plan and supporting narrative slides had been circulated to ET for review, subject to amendments currently being incorporated following a meeting with the chairman. ET was asked to await an updated version from Tracy Barr before commenting further. Once received from Tracy, ET members were asked to email back their thoughts, also copying in Gill Leng.

**ACTION: ALL**

1. In terms of next steps, it was agreed ET members should begin conversations with their senior teams to discuss what the strategy means for their respective directorates, Jennifer will share the updated version with SCW consultants and Gill Leng will present an overview of the slides at the all staff meeting on 20 January.

**ACTION: JH/GL**

## Review of the process for CHTE: proposal for change (item 11)

1. The ET reviewed a draft board paper outlining the proposals for making changes to NICE’s current methods for health technology evaluation within CHTE specifically to align the four health technology evaluation programmes.
2. ET considered whether the present time was appropriate to launch a public consultation. There was a concern of feedback bias in favour of industry with much less input from clinicians, patients and charities. Following debate, it was agreed to proceed as planned but for Jen Prescott to liaise with the Public Involvement Programme team to ask their view on the timing and to consider options including an extended consultation period or virtual sessions to allow verbal feedback from patients and charity groups. Paul Chrisp also recommended liaising with Fiona Glen’s team to learn from their experience with the Long COVID guidance process.

**ACTION: JP/FG**

1. Jennifer Howells queried whether the proposals would have an impact on TA charging which was due to be reviewed in Q4 and was currently under discussion with the DHSC. Charging was mentioned briefly in the paper but Jen Prescott was asked to include a more specific explanation and to agree the wording with Jennifer and Jane Newton.

**ACTION: JP**

1. It was agreed to proceed with presenting the paper at the January Board meeting with ET comments and a glossary incorporated, and with a mitigation strategy for receiving stakeholder feedback. Gill Leng asked that the paper reflect the emerging strategy, to make it clear that the work was aligned and supportive of the new direction.

**ACTION: MB/JP**

## London office move (item 12)

1. Jennifer Howells confirmed that the DHSC was hoping to sign the lease imminently. The outstanding issues were the capability of the Main Equipment Room and an AV/VC solution. Alexia advised that progress with the AV equipment has been slow but there is a further meeting on Friday. The risk is that the budget allocation could be lost if an order is not placed soon and delivered within the current financial year. Jennifer advised that she was speaking with Richard Alderman who was of the view that procuring the right option was better than proceeding with haste.
2. The London office group has now signed off on the soft furnishings although NICE staff were being discouraged from going into the office. It was noted however that the other ALBs were planning to make the office available to their staff without a facilities presence on site.

## Gold group (item 13)

1. The ET noted the following decision made at the Gold group:
* to raise the business continuity incident level reflecting concerns for capacity and morale, and to consider the response by individual teams and programmes of work.
1. In light of the above decision, it was agreed to hold a Gold group meeting on Thursday, 14 January in lieu of the informal ET catch up.

## Strategy and business planning (item 14)

1. Jennifer Howells confirmed the agenda and timings for the business planning meeting on 13 January which will involve each Director outlining their priorities for next year followed by a group discussion of the interdependencies to reach a shared understanding.

**Review of the meeting (item 15)**

1. No comments raised.

## Other business (item 16)

1. **Strategic engagement** – Jennifer advised that she now has a revised scope for the strategic engagement and influencing work. It was agreed to defer the discussion until Gill Leng was present.

**ACTION: JH**