**National Institute for Health and Care Excellence**

Executive Team

# Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2021

## Present

Gill Leng Chief Executive

Meindert Boysen Director, Centre for Health Technology Evaluation and Deputy Chief Executive

Paul Chrisp Director, Centre for Guidelines

Jane Gizbert Director, Communications

Felix Greaves Director, Science, Evidence and Analytics

Judith Richardson Acting Director, Health & Social Care

Alexia Tonnel Director, Digital, Information and Technology

## In attendance

Boryana Stambolova Deputy Director, Finance, Strategy and Commercial

Rebecca Threlfall Chief of Staff

Elaine Repton Corporate Governance and Risk Manager (minutes)

Grace Marguerie Associate Director – Human Resources (items 4.2 and 5.2)

Michelle Rowlands Facilities and Estates Manager (item 4.2)

Jenniffer Prescott Programme Director, Planning and Operations (item 5.1)

Helen Knight Programme Director, Technical Appraisals and HST (item 5.1)

Sheela Upadhyaya Associate Director – Highly Specialised Technologies (item 5.1)

Richard Diaz Senior Technical Adviser – CHTE (item 5.1)

Lori Farrer Associate Director – Topic Selection, CHTE (item 5.1)

Ian Watson Senior Technical Adviser – CHTE (item 5.1)

Lynn Woodward Project Manager – CHTE (item 5.1)

Rebecca Smith Head of Media – Communications (item 5.1)

Lisa Hooley OD Learning and Talent Manager – HR (item 5.2)

Martin Davison Associate Director – Finance (item 6.1)

John Pegington Senior Management Accountant – Finance (item 6.1)

David Coombs Associate Director - Corporate Office (item 6.2)

## Apologies (item 1)

1. Apologies were received from Jennifer Howells who was represented by Boryana Stambolova.

## Declarations of interest (item 2)

1. The previously declared interests were noted.

## Notes of the previous meeting (item 3.1)

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2021 were agreed as a correct record, subject to correcting Boryana Stambolova’s job title and amending the fast track technology appraisal to ‘FTA lite’.

## Matters arising (item 3.2)

1. The actions from the meeting held on 6 July 2021 were noted as complete or in hand.
2. Rebecca Threlfall advised that she would be in touch with each Director to agree which of their external meeting packs would be helpful to share with ET colleagues, and a process for managing this going forward.

ACTION: RT

1. It was noted that the invites for the Autumn ‘external input’ events will be sent out this week.
2. Following the decision to close the NICE student champions scheme in the Autumn, ET discussed how to retain the established partnerships with undergraduate schools in the longer term and to provide a teaching resource for students on the importance of NICE’s role in healthcare, via the NICE website. There was support for retaining the strategic partnerships and for considering innovative digital ways to support education in the future.
3. Judith Richardson advised that she was in discussions with HEE and will be meeting with relevant leads internally to discuss the feasibility of retaining links with the network of undergraduate schools. It was agreed to re-visit this issue later in the year.

**ACTION: JR/FG**

## Hot topics (item 4.1)

1. **COVID-19 Independent Inquiry** – Rebecca Threlfall provided an update on initial discussions which have taken place with an internal working group looking at preparations to be made for NICE’s response to the public inquiry. ET agreed that this will be a detailed piece of work to gather all the sources of data and evidence which will need to be supported by an additional resource in the Corporate Office team. It was agreed that Jennifer Howells would be the SRO and that any legal advice required be sought from DAC Beachcroft.

**ACTION: JH/DC**

1. **Quality Standards & Indicators Team** – Paul Chrisp confirmed that the Quality Standards & Indicators team will be moving from the Health & Social Care Directorate into the Centre for Guidelines from next week and will sit within Eric Power’s remit. Paul and Judith Richardson will be meeting with the team tomorrow, along with SCW who will facilitate the session. Judith will then send a communication to all the HSC directorate teams to advise them of the changes, and there will be an update in the CE’s slides at the July all staff meeting. It was noted that the Resource Impact Assessment team will also be moving into the Finance, Strategy and Transformation Directorate.

**ACTION: JR/GL**

## Lifting of social distancing restrictions (item 4.2)

1. ET considered the implications of the government’s lifting of social distancing restrictions on the return to the new way of working, particularly the use of the offices, office attendance and travel. It was agreed to move to ‘new normal/hybrid working’ from 19 July and to update NICE’s operating framework on NICE Space to reflect the changes. The facilities teams were asked to remove the one way system in the offices and to fully open the toilets, meeting rooms and the communal areas.

**ACTION: MR**

1. There was a debate about wearing masks in the office and it was agreed to follow the Government’s advice of recommending staff continue to wear a mask in crowded areas such as lifts, toilets, kitchen areas and generally moving around the office, as more people begin to return. Michelle Rowlands was asked to provide wording for the CE’s daily message to be shared with all staff following the ET meeting.

**ACTION: MR**

1. In relation to travel, domestic travel will now be permitted between offices but for international travel the default will remain virtual, unless considered to be essential. Gold group was asked to consider what controls should be put around visitors being allowed back into NICE’s offices.

**ACTION: JH/ER**

1. ET discussed the requirement to attend the office, being mindful of the intentions of the other ALBs who share NICE office space, the expectations of the board and further advice awaited from the Department of BEIS. Some Directors expressed concern that the change in tone regarding returning to the office would come as a surprise to staff who may have been expecting a timeframe of December 2021. It was agreed to discuss this further at next week’s meeting, along with the BEIS advice, if received. Grace Marguerie advised that she will be bringing a paper to ET on 27 July on future hybrid working.

## CHTE methods and process review (item 5.1)

1. Meindert Boysen asked ET to review the draft reports and ‘launch’ pack for the July private board meeting, ahead of the second consultation on the health technology evaluation methods and process review, noting that the manual and the consultation questions were not part of the pack presented today.
2. ET sought clarity on exactly what was being asked of the board and recommended that the cover paper be amended to make this clear. It was also suggested that each of the three papers (topic selection, process and methods), should include a summary box at the start to highlight exactly what has changed and/or to include a hyperlink to the relevant section of the manual, to assist the reader. It was also requested that the additional comms paper and slide set be removed from the board version and a short summary paragraph be produced for each paper with help from the Comms Team, in a less technical and plain English version suitable for lay people. Rebecca Smith advised that an external agency was working on a summary for lay people which includes animation and graphics, which would also be helpful.

**ACTION: MB**

1. ET noted some of the issues were still to be resolved including criteria for topic selection in the HST programme which was awaiting further legal advice, modifiers for severity of disease and a query over the inclusion of a modifier for considering health inequalities, which ET agreed should be included.

## Staff survey report (item 5.2)

1. Grace Marguerie and Lisa Hooley presented the first draft of the 2021 staff survey results compiled by Survey Solutions which showed that the overall employee engagement score had remained stable compared with the 2019 survey at 79/100, which was pleasing in view of the difficult year. ET noted that there were some areas which required further work including the feedback on work/life balance, whether staff views are taken on board and career progression.
2. Grace agreed with ET that the next steps will be to:

* share the results with the HR business partners and staff forum leads, internal groups, the Unison Executive and the comms team to begin working on an action plan in response to feedback
* share the high level NICE-wide results with staff in a CE daily message and then publish them on NICE Space, followed by a highlights slide at the July all staff meeting
* share the EEI score with the board in July and work on an action plan for consideration by ET and the board in September
* share each directorate’s team level results with the respective director for them to discuss further with their teams and produce team action plans
* theme the free text comments and share them with directors in August

**ACTION: GM**

1. Directors were mindful of the work/life balance feedback and the ask for staff to be involved in developing team action plans at the same time as a call for volunteers to be part of the culture change working groups.

## Finance update (item 6.1)

1. Martin Davison presented the financial position as at 30 June 2021 which reported a net overspend due to a reduction in TA and HST income in June as a result of capacity issues. The year to date position was reporting an underspend of £0.4m resulting from a high level of vacancies and the uncommitted non-pay budget, notably the transformation and digital workplace programmes.
2. ET discussed the identified but currently uncommitted spend and the need for these projects to be progressed. Alexia Tonnel advised that her teams currently have 7 procurement exercises underway, but they all need managing. In relation to the TA programme, it was noted that there were 102 live topics with 40 having passed the first committee stage but not yet completed which is causing issues with charging.
3. ET discussed some additional funding requests. Kevin Harris has requested a CSR bid for next year to support the patient safety work. Martin was asked to follow up the request directly with Kevin. There was also a request to invest internally in training opportunities this year.

**ACTION: BS/MD**

1. Reference was made to the cost improvement programme targets which were proving to be a dis-incentive for some non-GIA funded initiatives, as teams try to calculate costs for next year. Martin recognised that it is hard to make a profit margin and sometimes difficult to reclaim overheads from external grants but stated all non-GIA income does make a positive financial contribution and encouraged teams to continue to explore external funding streams.

## MHRA and NICE board to board meeting (item 6.2)

1. ET reviewed the proposed agenda and arrangements for the MHRA and NICE board to board meeting planned for Tuesday, 19 October. It was agreed to feedback to MHRA with a suggestion that for each of the questions posed in the syndicate exercises, whether there could be a shared objective and success criteria agreed.
2. David Coombs was also asked to feedback the suggestion of an external speaker over dinner from a non-healthcare/health related background to bring a different perspective to the discussion.

**ACTION: DC**

## Executive Team retreat actions (item 6.3)

1. ET were asked to review and confirm their actions arising from the retreat. It was agreed that the timeframe for the future model for quality standards be amended to September and the data on research recommendations to October.
2. Gill Leng agreed to discuss with Rebecca Threlfall plans for a further ET retreat in the Autumn ahead of the October board meeting.

**ACTION: GL/RT**

1. The ET meeting on 20 July will now be virtual as the July board meeting has moved to a virtual session. Gill Leng would like an ET meeting in person during August if possible.

**ACTION: ER**

## Review of the meeting (item 7)

1. ET reviewed the meeting and commented that the CHTE process and methods papers were difficult to navigate within the board intelligence software. Elaine Repton agreed to feedback to David Coombs to request more bookmarks in the pack produced for the board papers.

**ACTION: ER**

## Other business (item 8)

1. **Environmental sustainability group** – Felix Greaves advised that work was underway to re-launch the environmental sustainability group. It was agreed that Felix be nominated as the ET lead for the group.
2. **Honour’s list** – Rebecca Threlfall agreed to liaise with Meindert Boysen regarding the process for making a NICE nomination to the honour’s list.

**ACTION: RT/MB**