

Minutes of an Extra Ordinary meeting of the **Borders NHS Board** held on Thursday 2 September 2021 at 11.00am via MS Teams.

**Present:**

- Mrs K Hamilton, Chair
- Mrs F Sandford, Vice Chair
- Ms S Lam, Non Executive
- Ms H Campbell, Non Executive
- Cllr D Parker, Non Executive
- Mr J Ayling, Non Executive
- Mr J McLaren, Non Executive
- Mr R Roberts, Chief Executive
- Dr L McCallum, Medical Director
- Mrs S Horan, Director of Nursing, Midwifery & AHPs
- Dr T Patterson, Director of Public Health

**In Attendance:**

- Miss I Bishop, Board Secretary
- Mrs J Smyth, Director of Planning & Performance
- Mrs N Berry, Director of Operations
- Mr A Carter, Director of Workforce
- Mrs C Oliver, Communications Manager
- Mr C Myers, General Manager P&CS

## **1. Apologies and Announcements**

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from Mrs Lucy O'Leary, Non Executive, Mr Tris Taylor, Non Executive, Mrs Alison Wilson, Non Executive, Mr Andrew Bone, Director of Finance, Mr Rob McCulloch-Graham, Chief Officer, Health & Social Care and Mr Gareth Clinkscale, Director of Acute Services
- 1.2 The Chair to welcomed Mr Chris Myers, General Manager, Primary & Community Services to the meeting who would be speaking to the item on Coldingham Branch Surgery.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed members of the public to the meeting (Mr C Easton, Mr D Thomson, Ms P Bells, Ms F Clift, Ms E Johnstone, Mr D Jones, Mrs R Hamilton MSP, Ms J Sutton, Ms M Fenty, Mr A McGilvray, Mr N Wray, Ms E Johnstone, Dr K Robinson GP).
- 1.4 The Chair to confirmed the meeting was quorate.
- 1.5 The Chair reminded the Board that a series of questions and answers on the papers had been provided and their acceptance would be sought at each item on the agenda along with any further questions. The Q&A would not be revisited during the discussion.

## **2. Register of Interests**

- 2.1 The Chair sought any verbal declarations of interest pertaining to items on the agenda.

The **BOARD** noted there were none.

## **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

- 3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of the Borders NHS Board held on 24 June 2021 were approved.

## **4. Matters Arising**

The **BOARD** noted the action tracker.

## **5. Coldingham Branch Surgery**

- 5.1 Mr Chris Myers provided an overview of the content of the paper. He highlighted: the background to the matter; the public engagement process that had been undertaken; the concerns of the Medical Practice in being unable to sustain dispensing services from the Coldingham Branch Surgery; the site visit undertaken; the correspondence with the practice patients; discussions with Coldingham Community leaders; the review of GP and pharmaceutical service provisions in the area and their potential loss; the recruitment campaigns undertaken to fill staffing vacancies; and the correspondence received from the Medical Practice.
- 5.2 Mr Myers advised that the GP Sub Committee had noted the Eyemouth Medical Practice situation in terms of sustainability of services in a rural location with recruitment challenges. The Area Pharmaceutical Committee had also considered the provision of services in the context of the Pharmaceutical Care Services Plan and had noted the nearest Community Pharmacy was located in Eyemouth some 3.5 miles from Coldingham.
- 5.3 Mrs Clare Oliver drew the attention of the Board to section 3.3 of the paper and confirmed that ownership of the building was outwith the scope of the Board as the buildings were privately owned by the Medical Practice.
- 5.4 Mrs Oliver recorded her thanks to the local community for their contributions to the engagement process. She advised that the scope of the engagement had been based on the Eyemouth Medical Practice sustainability issues and detailed the process undertaken. There had been a consultation period of 6 weeks and scrutiny and advice had been provided by Healthcare Improvement Scotland Community Engagement colleagues.
- 5.5 The Chair summarised the conversation and gave recognition to: the impact on the local community service users of closing the Coldingham Branch Surgery; the significant impact on the provision of primary medical services to the patient population of 6,500 provided by the small Eyemouth Medical Practice team if the closure did not go ahead; and the potential impact on other Practices if patients had to register with another Practice in Duns, Greenlaw and Berwick. She reminded the Board that the short life working group had reviewed the situation, the evidence and

the consultation outcomes and recommended that the Board support the withdrawal of the dispensing contract and closure of the branch surgery.

- 5.6 Mrs Sonya Lam commented that she recognised that it was not an easy decision to make in terms of centralising services to Eyemouth and a balance was needed in terms of what was viable. She enquired about any added value in centralising services. Mr Myers commented that the closure would allow the practice to reduce the risk to the practice and the partnership itself and would create more clinical time in the existing workforce to provide direct clinical care to patients. He advised that the Practice had been part of the process and they were looking at a number of mitigating measures for their patients to ensure they would continue to have access to the practice, such as flexibility of appointments for those travelling to the practice on public transport and reviewing the repeat prescriptions process. He emphasised that the Practice were very sympathetic to the situation and were keen to support their patients as best they could.
- 5.7 Mrs Harriet Campbell commented that there appeared to be a significant number of prescriptions, in the region of 3000 for around 800 patients, and she enquired if some of those patients were suffering from health inequalities and what engagement had taken place with those patients who would be impacted the most by the closure of the branch surgery. She further enquired about what would happen if the Board did not withdraw the dispensing contract and the practice advised that it could not fulfil the contract requirements.
- 5.8 Mrs Oliver commented that the engagement team were not privy to specific patient detail due to confidential requirements. She assured the Board that the entire practice population has been consulted and access to prescriptions and pharmacy dispensing had been the main theme of the consultation feedback. Mrs Campbell enquired if work had been undertaken on health inequalities and Mrs Oliver commented that a freestanding piece of work on health inequalities was being taken forward.
- 5.9 In terms of the dispensing contract, Mr Myers commented that the contract could not be surrendered by the Practice, the Board would have to withdraw the contract. If the contract was not withdrawn then the Eyemouth Medical Practice would remain in the current situation with an inability to recruit to a dispensing post and therefore putting the rest of the partnership under pressure leading to a further fragility of primary medical services for the population of the Eyemouth Medical Practice.
- 5.10 Mr Ralph Roberts suggested that both decisions needed to be separated, one decision was in regard to the dispensing contract and the other was in regard to the closure of the branch surgery. He commented that the dispensing decision was linked to the availability of pharmaceutical services and the branch surgery was a parallel issue. He advised the Board to keep both decisions separate even though they were interlinked.
- 5.11 Mr Roberts recognised that it was a difficult decision for the Board and there would undoubtedly be an impact from whatever decision was made. There had to be a good balance of risk on the judgement made and when a further discussion with politicians and stakeholders had taken place earlier in the week, views and concerns had been clearly expressed and acknowledged. He further commented that as a Board it had to make difficult decisions and look at matters in the wider

context of the provision of primary medical services and he recommended with a heavy heart that the proposals be supported.

- 5.12 Mr Roberts emphasised to the Board that it was important to continue to work with the Eyemouth Practice and local communities to identify ways to mitigate any health inequalities impacts as much as possible wherever possible.
- 5.13 Mr Roberts advised that Mr Tris Taylor had asked that if the Board were supportive of the recommendations, that the Board agree to support work to be taken forward in co-production with the local community and the Eyemouth Medical Practice to assist the patients most impacted by the decision.
- 5.14 Dr Lynn McCallum reflected the clinicians voice in the matter and advised that she had spent an afternoon with the Eyemouth Medical Practice and it had been evident to her that there had been lots of brainstorming and soul searching by the partners with a desire to deliver the highest and safest clinical care possible to the practice population. The partners had not been able to identify a way to do that safely and effectively. She commented that the partners were deeply unhappy that they were in the position of seeking the dispensing service contract be removed and the branch surgery be closed.
- 5.15 Mr John McLaren enquired about any provision of pharmacy home delivery services in the area and if the public transport bus timetables could be influenced to assist patients. Mr Myers commented that there was one pharmacy home delivery service in place that was not an NHS service and patients might incur a charge for the service. He commented that the provision of any pharmacy home delivery service would be a business decision for community pharmacies. In terms of public transport, discussions would be taken forward with Border buses to help mitigate impacts on patients where possible.
- 5.16 Mr James Ayling commented that he agreed with the recommendation to close the branch surgery premises and supported the view on co-production as relayed by Mr Roberts on behalf of Mr Taylor.

The **BOARD** noted the current situation relating to the sustainability concerns of the Coldingham Branch Surgery.

The **BOARD** noted that a Short Life Working Group was established to undertake a review, with the aim of ensuring the safe and sustainable delivery of medical and pharmaceutical services to meet the needs of the Scottish Borders Population in the area.

The **BOARD** noted that following the conclusions of the review, the paper made recommendations on the future provision of services in Coldingham Branch Surgery. The **BOARD** considered and accept those recommendations.

In the context of a lack of appropriate mitigating measures, and due to the potential impacts of sustaining the Coldingham branch surgery and dispensing service on the overall sustainability of the whole of Eyemouth Medical Practice putting at risk the provision of General Medical Services for a much wider population, the **BOARD** supported the recommendations of the Short Life Working Group that:

- a) NHS Borders withdraw the dispensing service contract, and;

b) NHS Borders endorse the closure of the Coldingham Branch Surgery.

The **BOARD** agreed that work would be taken forward in co-production with local communities, other stakeholders and sectors to explore ways for the Eyemouth Medical Practice to manage their appointment service to link to those patients who required public transport and for the provision of potential home delivery pharmacy services.

The **BOARD** would monitor progress through it's Action Tracker.

## 6. Any Other Business

There was none.

## 7. Date and Time of next meeting

7.1 The Chair confirmed that the next scheduled meeting of Borders NHS Board would take place on Thursday, 7 October 2021 at 9.00am via MS Teams.

7.2 The Chair advised that an Extra Ordinary Board meeting would be held on Wednesday 29 September 2021 at 4pm to agree the Annual Report and Accounts.

*The meeting concluded at 11.46am.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Stewart', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Signature:

...

**EXTRA ORDINARY BORDERS NHS BOARD: 2 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

<b>No</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Question/Observation</b>	<b>Answers</b>
1	Declarations of Interest		
2	Minutes of Previous Meetings	<b>Karen Hamilton:</b> Noted	-
3	Matters Arising	<b>Karen Hamilton:</b> None	-
4	Appendix-2021-63 Coldingham Branch Surgery	<b>Karen Hamilton:</b> No further questions.	-
5	Appendix-2021-63 Coldingham Branch Surgery	<b>Lucy O'Leary:</b> I am happy to support the recommendation made by the Short Life Working Group as set out in the paper	-