**HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL OPTICAL COMMITTEE AGM**

**Monday 21st March 2021**

 **Zoom Meeting**

**MINUTES**

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| **Present:** |  |  |
| Jane Bunker (Chair) (JB)Hansil Shah (Vice Chair) (HS)Sumila Kasaven (Vice Chair) (SK)Eileen Gay (Treasurer) (EG) | Steve Roberts (IT) (SR)Mary BramleyAnita Jones (AJ) (Note Taker)Peter Chapman (PC) | Karan Sai Malik (KSM) Katie Patel (KP)Kavita Kathuria (KK)David Fleming (DF) |

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Amisha Pau, Daniel Harris, Dawn Doe, Sally Tucker and Wendy d’E Vallancey

Prior to the start of the meeting, a discussion about the voting took place and whether Proxy Votes had been applied for. It was agreed that the vote given by DH would be accepted due to the circumstances behind DH having to send apologies at the last minute.

1. **Meeting Etiquette, Introductions and Election of the Chair**

The elected Chair - Sumila Kasaven welcomed everyone and introduced herself along with HS and advised that AJ would be taking notes.

Housekeeping – cameras are to be on, you remain muted whilst not talking and your full name is shown on the screen. Any IT issues to be put into the chat and SR will give assistance. Everyone should have copies of the 2020 Meeting Minutes, the Agenda for today’s meeting, along with reports from the Chair and Treasurer. If you have not received these papers, please put your email address in the chat and they will be sent to you.

The Committee Members introduced themselves for the benefit of the observers.

1. **Minutes from 2020 AGM**

Minutes from the meeting on 6th July 2020 were accepted as a true representation of the meeting and approved. JB wished to have her thanks to DD for doing an amazing job of taking and typing up the minutes – only about 5 typos in the whole document.

1. **Matters Arising**

No matters arising.

1. **Chairman’s Report**

It has been a long tough year for all of us. It is almost a year to the day since Boris Johnson told us all to stay at home and that some businesses would have to close immediately. For me, it was the start of Joe Wicks every morning with my youngest daughter aged 20. We had just collected her from university the week before. We were all struggling to comprehend how the world was just shutting up shop. We used to walk every day at 6 o’clock not only for her mental health, but mine to. She is a second year Vet student and under so much pressure. These were great bonding sessions and we walked every day until September. My other daughter was also at home on her placement year. That first weekend of lockdown my husband went down with COVID 19 symptoms, so it was a very interesting week of taking meals on a tray to the bedroom wearing gloves and sanitising everything in sight. We all lost our sense of taste and smell over the next couple of weeks, which was great for my cooking as no-one complained. Luckily, we all remained well and settled into this new life together

My initial aim for the LOC was to keep everyone up to date as quickly we could and disseminate the huge amounts of information we were receiving on a daily and sometimes hourly basis and provide support to all, whether it was Locums, Owners, Staff Members, multiples, independents. I wanted Herts LOC to be the first point of contact with queries and requests for advice and guidance. I wanted to strengthen our relationships with the CCGs, Hospitals and other providers in the area. We should be proud of what we achieved: one example is that we managed to find practitioners to help the diabetic eye screening service. The DESP came to me in a desperate state saying they had 7,000 patients as a back log and were there any Optoms that could help. 22 people came forward to offer help. Another example is that I received an email from The University of Hertfordshire wanting to get all their optometry students vaccinated; we got that sorted out within a week as well.

We have made new links, such as the Herts Vision Loss Charity. They have been extremely useful both with their support for the patients with vision difficulties and with all their paperwork.

The communications Herts LOC have received has been vast. We have 2 CCGs, West Essex LOC, Optegra, Spa-medica, CHEC, Lister, Princess Alexandra, West Herts Hospitals, NHS England & Improvement, LOCSU and an East of England LOC Group which had only just started going last year, but it has been immense support to help with the incisive number of queries received.

The queries range from a sole domiciliary provider who could not get his grant, all the PPE queries when PPE was scarce. PPE equipment arrived at the house in an NHS truck, only for the visors not to be at the required standards and had to be returned the following week. There are so many other examples of where the LOC has successfully resolved practitioner’s concerns in such an enormous variety of ways that I never considered I would get involved with. Trying, but not yet successfully getting CUES and MECs commissioned. The Hertfordshire CCGs are happy with the current situation.

I have had a lot of contact with the Clinical Service Director at Moorfields, he was despairing that patients were just turning up with no prior approval. After lots of discussions we have a plan that seems to have worked, so thank you to all practitioners for taking that on board.

Recently we had 3 o’clock daily huddles, NHS word not mine, to try to set up a new electronic eye referral system for us to be able to upload the active, LOC full volume scan to a hospital for advice and guidance. Our ICS, which is West Essex and Hertfordshire decided not to proceed at present because there is not enough funding for this. There is only £200,000, which sounds like a lot of money, but is not enough to actually run it. No-one could guarantee any money for the second year and no-one had approached the Hospitals and Optoms to enquire what would be needed to make it a success. I think this was the correct decision at the time, however I did learn a lot about commissioning and how many people had to be involved to procure these systems.

The workload has been and still continues to have many interesting and challenging moments. There are days when I do not leave my laptop, I was on Zoon or Teams and did not have time to worry about my background.

The first year I was Chair the LOC sent out 3 Newsletters for the whole year to just over 200 contacts on our list. Just to show the volume, this year we have sent more than 130 emails and we now have 400 contacts, so many that at one point we were blocked by Google because they thought we were spam and SR had to take over, swap to Mail Chimp and learn a whole new process to enable us to keep sending you updates. This illustrates the huge effort that goes on behind the scenes to keep everyone updated. So our mailing list has doubled and our updates have increase exponentially, it is actually a 4,000% increase on communications.

Lastly I would like to thank SR who became my first contact, he has put up with me being a night owl and has been a constant support. Also the Vice Chairs, SK and HS thank you. Whenever I have come to you, you have always come straight back with sensible and reliable advise. EG thank you for checking all my hours to make sure they are OK. AJ, we decided to go for a walk to discuss CHEC, well 2 ½hours later I was finally allowed to go back to my car. WdEV has been great. Because she was the previous Chair she has been the perfect sounding board. PC I must not forget all the emails with documents, which I must confess that some are way beyond me or too long to read, but thank you for keeping me on my toes. KP, you might remember calling me when I was walking along the canal, we actually forgot to switch off and go home as we were so engrossed in our conversation. MB & ST, the CET, little did we know how successful our on-line CET would be. KK, I appreciate all your lists of back up, I could just talk to you and would come back straight away. AP, who wants to be involved with the CET, which is lovely and then she said she would need to take maternity leave. DD, I have promised her that I would not talk too much as the recordings will be so long. DH, the previous Vice Chair, has been great with all his experience and knowledge. KSM, thank you for setting up the WhatsApp group. DF, I can see that over the next year or two, once you have a bit more grounding with the LOC I can see us using you much more in the future, especially as you are doing your IP. Amnish, who is stepping down due to work and family commitments. I want to record our vote of thanks for all the input over the years.

I hope to continue as Chair, I believe there is so much more we can do and I just want to be part of that journey as the pandemic hopefully gets under control and we settle into our new normal. It has been a year like no other and I want to thank you all because I do appreciate all your support and LOC should be proud of how much we have improved the communication for all our members and we have received numerous emails of thanks, which I have found quite uplifting at times when I have been there at 2300.

1. **Treasurer’s Report 2020 Accounts, 2021 Budget & Statutory Levy**

From the Treasurer’s point of view last year was extraordinary as well, I know the amount of work that everyone has put in has been absolutely huge because they itemise it out exactly.

No questions were raised about the 2020/2021 Accounts. Budget setting at the moment will be a glorified guess. Looking at this year so far the income has been about 50% of previous years, but January, February payments which refer to December, January GOS activity is always lower than average. The notes on the projections are included in the report sent out. Things are unlikely to be back to normal next year, EG would rather under estimate income than over estimate.

People need to think about an increase on the Statutory Levy as we do not want to be in the situation in about 18 months time where we are running out of money. It took 8 months to get it changed last time. We really need a decision now as it may not be effective until next year anyway. A suggested 1.25% increase, which is less than other LOCs. A discussion about the amount of time it takes to change the levy and what this would make the average charge took place. The question of how much is being paid at the moment was asked and EG replied .75, of which LOCUS require .5, therefore we end up with .25.

EG will need someone from the Committee to feed back to her when the deduction has increased. PC proposer for both the Accounts and Levy increase and KK has seconded both.

1. **Electing Auditors**

EG has spoken with JB about this, the current auditors were recommended by EG’s accountant and are about 25 miles each way. EG is keen to use auditors based closer and not connected to her to ensure complete transparency. The accounts do not actually require an audit but do need to be examined. EG has someone in mind and can come back later in the year with some proposals. It was suggested to send the accounts via secure delivery. JB would prefer the accounts be audited. It was not an option on this occasion as the Auditor’s office has been closed. Committee agreed to carry on with the current auditors.

1. **Elections**

SK covered the guidelines around Committee Members proportions, Committee Member elections and committee member terms of service.

Herts LOC has a healthy 16 members and there is 1 vacancy. We have received 4 excellent applicants

 SK read out the names of the 4 applicants and thanked them for sending in their credentials. Each applicant was asked to say a few words.

 Applicants were asked to leave the meeting whilst voting took place

 JB – Deepali AJ – Deepali Janice Levin - Deepali

HS – Uanis EG – Deepali SK - Uanis

MB – Deepali DF – Deepali SR - Deepali

KM – Deepali David Abrahams - Deepali

KK – Deepali Chris Bairstow - Deepali

KP – Deepali Sonya Cantaria - Deepali

PC – Deepali Jack Levin - Deepali

 The applicants were invited back to the meeting. SK thanked them all again and advised them that there was a successful candidate and welcomed Deepali to Herts LOC.

1. **Any Other Business**

SK asked if there were any questions or anything that anyone, members or observers would like to ask a question or have anything they would like to share.

PC – wanted to address the unsuccessful candidates. We very much hope that you will keep in touch with the LOC because we did think that all 4 applications were very good indeed, we only had the one vacancy, but please do keep in touch. This was echoed by other members of the committee.

SK thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions this evening, we hope to see you at future meetings. Observers are always welcome to our meetings.

Thank you to all the Committee Members, in particular JB and SR who have been working tirelessly over the past year during the pandemic to communicate the changes that have been occurring weekly from various governing bodies to our mailing list so a big thank you to you both.

Congratulations to our newest Committee Member, Deepali.

A special thanks to Shevani, Hema and Uanis for your applications, just to second what PC said we do hope you will keep in touch in the future.

We would like to send out a feedback form and would appreciate you completing it to enable us to make improvements for the next AGM.

KS, JB and some other committee members will be staying online if you would like to join us to ask any questions please do, if not thank you again for joining, hopefully see you soon and have a good evening.

Meeting Closed