Sandwell LOC AGM 9th March 2023

**In attendance**

Peter Bainbridge (Chair) PB

Divya Sudera (Vice Chair) DS

Peter Hampson (Secretary) PH

Louise Sarjeant (Treasurer) LS

Inderpal Bansal IB Jaspinderpal Bansal JB

Majid Jawaid Anisha Kaur AK

Nisha Missra NM Saima Naroo SN

Wasim Sarwar WS Paul Sidhu PS

Richard Stokes RS Abrar Zaman AZ

**Apologies** – David Wright

**Minutes of last AGM** – accepted.

**Matters arising** - nil

**Chair’s Report** – Peter Bainbridge

Several of the issues reported this year are the same issues as last year.

In yet another year of unusual circumstance there has been a great deal of activity for LOCs. Sandwell LOC have been active in many ways, much of it still online but there has been a welcome increase in face to face.

Confederation of the Regional Optical Committee involving the LOCs of Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Birmingham & Solihull still has final practical details to be dealt with. This will become more important in future with the NHS going through one of its “centralisation” phases.

The Workforce Development Grant we were chasing at this time last year has become a rolling annual £50,000 sum, of which the ROC has just received the 3rd payment. Plans to help colleagues towards attainment of higher qualifications are coming to fruition.

This will make it possible for optometry to carry out a wider range of commissioned services.

Last year I reported that 2022 should see the formation of a new LEHN for our area. This has not happened. They should be a part of the NHS organisation as they are in many other parts of the country.

The NHS Eers, the electronic referral system for optical practices, had its successful bidder announced on 19/1/23. There are significant issues involved in its set up and roll out that needs the input of LOCs, whether they allow for that remains to be seen.

SLOC have participated in holding a number of CPD events, remotely and face to face. The annual Sandwell/Dudley whole day event was held this year and was the usual resounding success.

CCGs ceased to exist this year, being replaced by ICS/ICBs. West Birmingham is no longer part of Sandwell and is once again part of Birmingham.

The Birmingham, Solihull and the Black Country diabetic retinopathy screening service went out to tender this year. After many years of Heartlands running the service, the tender was won by In Health Intelligence. IHI needed to contact local practices to use some optometry practices for the patient facing provision of their service. The ROC helped IHI to contact optometrists in the area. We tried at the same time, without any worthwhile degree of success, to achieve some level of accountability for whatever choices were made by IHI. Since the selection process and the commencement of the new service there are reports to LOCs of patient poaching and questionable use of GOS. The ROC have taken steps to try to help prevent this continuing.

There has been the formation of The Black Country Collaborative, made up of optometrists, ophthalmologists/consultants and eye related service staff. It has the aims of shortening waiting times for eye appointments and making services throughout the Black Country more uniform.

The public are waiting even longer to access NHS services, even for conditions which cannot wait. Optometry can shorten those waits for eyecare given the opportunity to do so by those holding the purse strings. There is the desire within the NHS for this to happen. The LOC will, as always, be putting forward the case for optometry.

I would like to thank all of the Committee for their help and support for the profession locally throughout the year. Sandwell is fortunate in the members it has on the committee with deep knowledge of the profession and the politics around LOC work. There are members with great enthusiasm for the aims of the LOC and the profession in general.

I will not be standing as chair for the coming year so there will be a younger person taking the reins (that won’t be difficult).

It is an exciting time of opportunity for the profession and I am sure my successor as chair will rise to the challenge.

**Treasurer’s Report** – Louise Sarjeant

There was an increase in expenditure in 2022, as to be expected given a more normal year post-lockdowns. We had our first in-person CPD event in September and a return to the NOC which saw an increase in spending.

The CPD event was well attended and once the sponsorship had been taken into account, the costs were split with Dudley LOC as usual.

We had several in-person LOC meetings, however these were paid for prior to the pandemic, when we had to cancel a few meetings, so there were no additional costs. We are looking to have a mix of virtual and in-person committees in future, which should reduce the cost of meetings compared with pre-pandemic years.

Progress is being made on the formation of the West Midlands Confederation and as previously stated, this will have some additional expenses, although these are expected to be minimal, currently being set at 1% of our income.

We have once again hit our target of having equal income and expenditure and have maintained reserves for 12 months of expenses. There are likely to be more meetings this year as engagement with the ICBs and PCNs increases, as such we will need to regularly review the budget and levy.

The levy is currently set at 1.3%, however I propose that the LOC maintains the flexibility to vary the levy amount by up to a maximum of 1.5% if necessary.

The contributions to LOCSU are 0.5% of the levy. LOCSU continue to help with community schemes and have been particularly valuable this year with regular treasurer meetings and providing guidance. It is therefore proposed Sandwell LOC should continue to contribute a levy of 0.5% to LOCSU.

The accounts will be audited by Martin Westbury of RJM Accountancy, who is based in Sandwell. It is therefore proposed to use RJM Accountancy again next year.

**Adoption of Reports**

Vote to adopt Chair’s report – majority agreed.

Vote to adopt Treasurer’s report – majority agreed.

**Elections**

There were 6 positions available on the committee and we had five nominations, so Peter Hampson, Anisha Kaur, Louise Sarjeant, Wasim Sarwar, Divya Sudera and David Wright are elected unopposed.

**Adoption of the statutory levy for the forthcoming financial year**

LS I propose to maintain the levy at 1.3%, with the flexibility to vary it up to a maximum of 1.5% if necessary – majority agreed

**Adoption of the contribution to LOCSU for the forthcoming financial year**

LS I propose that we continue to give LOCSU 0.5% - majority agreed

**Appointment of the Auditors for the forthcoming financial year**

LS I propose to continue using RJM accountancy – majority agreed

**AOB**

PS as PB is stepping down as Chair, does the Vice Chair take the role of interim Chair until the next meeting? Majority agreed.

PH extended thanks to the Chair for his work over the years on behalf of the committee and the optometrists in the region.