

## 1. Definitions

**Healthwatch** refers to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove.

**Board** refers to the Healthwatch Board of Directors.

**Chair** refers to the Chair of the Healthwatch Board of Directors.

## 2. Scope

This policy covers all members of the public attending Healthwatch board meetings.

## 3. Summary

This policy outlines good governance process of holding a board meeting where members of the public will be present.

Healthwatch aims to make all board meetings open to the public, but there may be times when the need for privacy to discuss internal employees, finance, or HR matters. When this is necessary, the board meeting will be held in two parts:

- Part I – open to the public.
- Part II – closed session for internal matters.

## 4. General Matters

- 4.1. Healthwatch will publish the time, date, and venue of a Public Board meeting 28 days in advance of the meeting on its website unless circumstances do not permit.
- 4.2. A Board meeting in public will normally be scheduled for 120 minutes.
- 4.3. The agenda for a Public Board Meeting and any supporting papers will be published, when possible, on the Company's website 7 working days in advance of the date of the meeting, unless circumstances do not permit.
- 4.4. Copies of the agenda and supporting papers will be made available at the meeting on prior request.
- 4.5. When there is a Part II closed session, members of the public will be required to leave - either in person or remotely when it is a virtual meeting.
- 4.6. Papers relating to all Part II agenda items will not be made available on the Healthwatch website but circulated to Board members only.

## 5. Agenda

- 5.1. Agenda items will be matters, which in the opinion of the Directors, are of interest to patients, service users, carers and the public who live or work in the city.
- 5.2. Minutes of a Public Board Meeting will be prepared for approval at the subsequent Public Board Meeting and will then be published on the Healthwatch website.
- 5.3. Time will be allocated to public participation at each Board meeting at the discretion of the Chair.

## 6. Public Questions

- 6.1. In order for the Board to provide an effective response to matters addressed to the Board, they request that questions are sent in to [office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk](mailto:office@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk) a minimum of 3 working days prior to the date of any scheduled Board meeting, together with a written summary of the issue in no more than 300 words. This does not preclude a member of the public addressing the Board without notice with permission of the Chair.
- 6.2. Questions and comment must be relevant to the local Healthwatch activities and should not be of a political or lobbying nature.
- 6.3. The Public Board Meeting is not an appropriate venue in which to discuss sensitive personal data such as detailed personal medical histories and these and similar matters can be discussed with Healthwatch confidentially.
- 6.4. A member of the public will be expected to limit their contribution/question to a maximum of 5 minutes. This can be extended at the discretion of the Chair.
- 6.5. Those attending or participating in a Board meeting in public will be expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner and respect the dignity of others whether they are at the meeting or not. The Chair reserves the absolute right to request a member of the public to cease their contribution or to leave the meeting if their conduct disrupts the business of the meeting.

## 7. Social Media & Filming

- 7.1. The board and those attending a Board meeting in public should be aware of the potential for those attending to publicly comment on the business of the meeting using social media channels.
- 7.2. A third party may not film a Public Board Meeting without prior permission of the Chair.

## 8. Virtual Public Board Meetings

There may be occasions when holding a virtual/remote board meeting may be necessary, and these guidelines have been developed to enable us to do so effectively.

8.1. Healthwatch uses Zoom for meetings which are open to the public (see Zoom section for details).

8.2. Meeting Papers and Presentations:

- Healthwatch will, where practicable, ensure that all documents and presentations are written in plain language and will include page numbers for ease of reference.
- Slides/Data should be legible on small devices. The main exception to this is where documents have been drafted by external organisations/third parties and these are being shared.
- Where possible and appropriate, documents for discussion will be 'shared' via Zoom.

8.3. Conducting virtual meetings:

- The Chair will join the meeting in advance to ensure the meeting has been set up correctly and to permit participants to enter.
- The meeting should start on time unless there have been any technical issues.

8.4. At the start of the meeting the Chair will make sure that everyone is aware of who is present in the meeting and confirm the rules of engagement:

- Everyone will mute themselves unless they are presenting a paper or asking a question.
- The Chair will invite people to speak either by asking them to present their report or answer a question, or by inviting a specific person to ask a question or make a comment.
- Anyone who wishes to speak will use the non-verbal prompt 'raise hand' icon or the Chat function. If this is not possible then please raise your hand. If you don't have a camera and/or have joined the meeting by phone please let the Chair know and they will try to accommodate you.

## 9. Using Zoom to join a meeting

9.1. Zoom is a free to use service that can be accessed by phone, tablets, or computer, without the need for installing an app.

9.2. Taking part on a laptop or desktop gives you a larger view. You don't have to download the app, but it can make some viewing easier on a phone.

### Connecting to the meeting:

9.3. When you register to attend a virtual meeting, we will send you by email or text, a link to join the meeting. As a backup, you will also be given a meeting ID and a password.

- 9.4. When it is time for the meeting, click on the link. If this doesn't work, you can copy/paste the link and into your browser. You can also join by visiting <https://zoom.us> and entering the meeting ID and password we sent you.
- 9.5. You should be given the option to join using your browser (Chrome, Safari, Edge, etc), or to download and install the app. You don't need to install the app or sign in to an account to participate. If you do choose to install the app then it will ask you to download it and go through the process.
- 9.6. When you join the meeting, it may show you a holding screen and tell you what we haven't started yet, but will let you in when we do.
- 9.7. Once the meeting starts:
  - It will ask you if you want to Join with video – agree if you are happy to do so.
  - It will then ask to Join with computer audio – agree to this.
- 9.8. Once you have joined the meeting – if using video – adjust screen / camera so your image is central in the box.

**During the meeting:**

- 9.9. To help manage the conversation we use the Chat feature. You can put a message here when you want to contribute.
- 9.10. To open Chat, look for a speech bubble icon. It may appear at the bottom of your screen or the top depending on what device you are using. You may need to move your mouse around to make the menu appear.

**10. Additional Policies & Documents**

- 10.1. The Healthwatch policies and documents referred to in this policy are available on request by contacting the Healthwatch Team on 01273 234 040 or email to [policies@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk](mailto:policies@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk).

Date Policy Reviewed	7 June 2023
At the 15 January 2024 meeting of the Healthwatch Brighton and Hove Board of Directors, the Board approved the recommendation to delegate authorisation of operational policies to the Chief Executive Officer of Healthwatch.	
Date Approved by the CEO	16 February 2024
Next Review Date	February 2026