Agenda Item: 21a

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn
NHS Foundation Trust

Committee Chair's Assurance Report

Report to:	Board of Directors (in Public)
Date of meeting:	5 October 2021
Title of Report:	Assurance Report from the Audit Committee
Recommendation:	For Assurance
Chair:	David Dickinson, Non-Executive Director
Purpose:	The report summarises the assurances received, approvals, recommendations and decisions made by the Audit Committee at its meeting on **14 September 2021**.
Background:	The Committee meets no less frequently than quarterly. Its purpose is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the Board Assurance Framework and associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Trust's financial, non-financial and quality performance to the extent that it affects the Trust's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment and to oversee the financial reporting process. The work of the Committee will facilitate the completion of the Annual Governance Statement by the Accounting Officer.
Item for Assurance	**Clinical Audit Quarter 1 Performance Report** Recognising the progress made in clinical audit, the Committee has partial assurance on clinical audit improvement, recognising further work is required to complete delivery of the Clinical Audit Improvement Plan. The Committee understands that there is full commitment to making further progress. The Director of Patient Safety will be discussing opportunities for joint working within the clinical audit function with other acute partners in the ICS. The Committee has requested an improvement trajectory moving forwards to include the next steps in the implementation plan.
Item for Assurance	**Internal Audit** The Committee received a progress report from the Trust's Internal Auditors indicating that overall, the internal audit programme is on track. The Committee welcomed feedback from Grant Thornton on the improved engagement with Directors and the Finance Team. The Committee received the Staff Engagement Internal Audit Report which provided a rating of 'significant assurance'. The report gives assurance on the approach to putting together the staff engagement programme and the monitoring of the programme at Trust, divisional and departmental level. The report included one advisory recommendation which will be taken forward as part of next year's staff engagement work programme. The Committee received the internal audit recommendation tracker,

	noting further progress is expected on completion of internal audit recommendations by the end of September 2021 and before the next Committee meeting. The Chair of the Audit Committee will write to the Chair of the People Committee to request there is a cross check of progress against internal audit actions between the Audit Committee and the People Committee.
Item for Assurance and Escalation	**External review – sit rep reporting** The Committee considered the external review of the Trust's sit rep reporting highlights the lack of digital maturity and the Trust's reactive approach in the absence of a digital strategy. The Committee considered there is much work to do and noted that work has commenced to put in place an information services improvement plan in response to the recommendations from the external report. **It is necessary to clarify which of the Board's sub Committees will monitor progress to deliver the improvement plan.** The Committee notes that a digital and informatics strategy will be prepared for the new financial year. There is a need to consider how the Trust's digital strategy will fit with an ICS digital strategy going forward. **The Committee recommend the Trust's digital developments in the context of the wider ICS is considered at a future Board development session.**
Item for Assurance	**Digital – cyber audit update** The Committee considered that there is partial assurance on the completion of the recommended actions from the internal audit report, recognising that the improvements are work in progress. The Committee recognises that the digital and cyber agenda will continuously evolve as technology advances and therefore this agenda will remain work in progress.
Item for Assurance	**IG and Cyber Security Compliance Forum Annual Report** The Committee considered the report shows good progress particularly in terms of the number of incidents which have reduced by around half, and the ICO reported incidents were found not to require further remedial action by the Trust. The Committee discussed the categorisation of incidents. The definitions used for categorisation will be shared with Committee members.
Item for Assurance	**Digital – Information Governance (IG) Incidents Report** The Committee noted that there have been 24 IG incidents in the reporting period which shows a slight reduction on the previous year's trajectory (26 last year). Confidential information disclosed in error is a recurring theme and represents 58% of all incidents. The Trust awaits a response from the ICO (Information Commissioner's Office) in relation to one reported incident. The Committee heard about the approach to staff communications and sharing of lessons learnt which is an ongoing theme going forward.
Item for Assurance	**Counter Fraud (LCFS) Update – Interim Report and draft action plan** Given new NHS Counter Fraud Authority (CFA) metrics are still awaited and there is no anticipated publication date at this stage, the Committee supported the LCFS approach to commence the Trust's risk

	assessment, with guidance being applied to the assessment once published. In considering the draft Counter Fraud Action Plan, the Committee wished to highlight the risk of the NHS CFA not publishing new governance standards in a timely manner. The LCFS has been proactive in engaging with the NHS CFA to set out the Trust's position and to encourage action.
Item for Assurance	**Counter Fraud and Bribery Awareness Survey 2021** The LCFS undertook the staff awareness survey in January 2021. The Committee was disappointed with the low response rate of 169 staff, (although an improvement on the 82 responses received in the previous year). The Committee recognised that January 2021 was an extremely busy time for staff with the winter and COVID pandemic pressures. The Committee noted only 45% of respondents had received counter fraud training and considered that improving the training levels, as well as increasing communications, would help to improve other aspects of the survey such as staff awareness of how to declare gifts and hospitality.
Item for Assurance	**Hospital Valuation** A full site valuation is underway by the Trust's new Valuers following discussions as part of the Trust's 2020/21 year-end audit. The Valuer will attend the December Audit Committee meeting to discuss the valuation report with the Committee.
Item for Assurance	**Declarations of Interest, Gifts, Hospitality & Sponsorship** Whilst there has been some progress, the Committee was disappointed in the current level of declarations of interest from decision-making staff. In order to improve compliance a joint letter from the CEO and Chair of the Audit Committee will be sent to those members of staff who have yet to complete their annual declaration.
Risks to refer to risk register:	None
Other items of business:	• External Audit – verbal update and Health Technical Update • Quarterly loss and waiver reports • Better Practice Payment Code • Premises Assurance Model report • Forward planner 2021/22

Attendance record

Attended:	D Dickinson – Committee Chair & Non-Executive Director G Ward – Non-Executive Director S Hayter – Non-Executive Director
Invitees:	C Shaw – CEO C Benham – Director of Finance J Humphries – Director of People

L Notley – Director of Patient Safety
L Lippman – Deputy Director of Finance
C Wilson – KPMG
C T McLaughlin – Grant Thornton
D-D A Graham – Grant Thornton
S Pooni – LCFS, Grant Thornton
M Robertson – LCFS, Grant Thornton
L Skaife-Knight – Deputy CEO (agenda items 7b, 12, 13, 14 and 15)
N Hall – Head of Digital (agenda items 12, 13, 14 and 15)
A Prime – Trust Secretary (minutes)