

6 August, 2012

Strong field for Trust's first-ever election

More than 100 people have put themselves forward to stand for election to play a key role in the future of local hospitals.

In total 115 people are contesting seats to gain election to the first Council of Governors for Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust.

That group is seeking election to 22 available places – 16 chosen by the public and patient members, and six staff members voted for by colleagues – and they will work alongside nine people selected to represent other bodies such as other NHS organisations, local authorities and universities.

The members of the council will have wide-ranging powers and influence as the Trust seeks to improve patient care and safety. The governors will:

- Select the Trust Chairman and non-executive directors, and determine their pay
- Hold the Board to account for performance
- Act as the link between the Trust Board and more than 7,500 public and patient Trust members, and more than 6,000 staff
- Influence the future strategic direction of the Trust

Having an elected Council of Governors is an essential element of becoming a Foundation Trust. Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust is in the final stage of the process to become an 'FT', with inspectors from the independent regulator Monitor arriving next month to begin the lengthy assessment process.

The average of more than five people contesting each seat is well beyond the expectations of the Trust, and far beyond the numbers seen by most aspiring Foundation Trusts.

Marianne Griffiths, Trust Chief Executive, said: "Becoming a Foundation Trust will radically change the way our hospitals are governed, and the relationship we have with local people. In turn, those changes will help drive improvements to the care we give to our patients, and our governors will be at the heart of that process.

“We have been blessed with an exceptionally strong field of candidates and we are told that the levels of interest in standing are unusual, practically unheard of.

“To have more than 100 people seeking to take such an active role in the running of their local hospitals is humbling, and a real vote of confidence in our staff. People feel a real connection with their hospitals here in West Sussex, and having such a committed Council of Governors will be invaluable as we work together to improve services for the future.”

Voting papers will be sent out to staff and members on 23 August, and the voting period closes on 18 September. A full list of candidates will be published at www.westernsussexhospitals.nhs.uk on 8 August, alongside the existing information about Foundation Trusts already available online.

Note: People can still sign up to be a member of the Trust at any time, although only existing members are eligible to vote in this election. For more information about becoming a member visit www.westernsussexhospitals.nhs.uk/about-us/foundation-trust-application

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