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People power for hospitals, as first-ever governors elected

And the results are in...

Thousands of votes have been cast to elect the first-ever Council of Governors for Western Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust.

The successful candidates will now play a hugely influential role in determining the future of local acute hospitals in the county – a future of vital importance to almost 500,000 people living nearby, and more than 6,000 staff working at St Richard's, Worthing and Southlands hospitals.

Public and patient members of the Trust have elected 16 Governors, to sit alongside six Trust staff voted for by their colleagues and a further nine appointed governors drawn from key bodies such as local authorities, GP commissioners and universities.

The governors elected by patient and public members are from Adur, Arun, Horsham, Chichester, and Worthing, and a wider 'Patient' group drawn from outside the Trust's five public constituency areas.

The full list of the newly-elected Governors can be seen at <http://www.westernsussexhospitals.nhs.uk/about-us/news/governor-election-results/>

The field of 114 candidates – 75 from the public and patient membership, 39 from staff members – was unusually wide for such a poll, and with more than 5,700 votes cast the 41% turnout was approximately twice the national average for similar NHS elections.

The 31-strong Council will hold the Trust Board to account, select the Chairman and non-executive directors, represent the views of the membership, and shape the strategic direction of hospital care.

A Council of Governors is one of the essential elements of Foundation Trusts, which are granted greater autonomy from central government. The Trust is currently in the final stages of being assessed for 'FT status' by Monitor, the independent regulator.

Trust Chairman Mike Viggers said: "This election has proved yet again the fantastic levels of support and commitment people feel towards their local hospitals in West Sussex. With such a wide field of candidates, and a high turnout, we know that we have a strong council which will stand us in good stead for the future.

"This Council has a big job to do on behalf of local people and I am looking forward to working with them in the years ahead. Staff at the Trust staff do incredible things for their patients every day, and now local people can play a role in helping us improve still further."

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