

Minutes of Authority meeting 18 March 2020

Details:

Area(s) of strategy this paper relates to:	Safe, ethical effective treatment/Consistent outcomes and support/Improving standards through intelligence
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Agenda item	1
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Meeting date	
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Author	Debbie Okutubo, Governance Manager
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Output:

For information or decision?	For decision
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Recommendation	Members are asked to confirm the minutes as a true record of the meeting
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Resource implications	
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Implementation date	
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Communication(s)	
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Organisational risk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Low	<input type="checkbox"/> Medium	<input type="checkbox"/> High
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Annexes	
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Minutes of the extraordinary Authority meeting on 18 March 2020

Members present	Sally Cheshire Margaret Gilmore Anita Bharucha Anthony Rutherford Emma Cave Kate Brian	Jonathan Herring Gudrun Moore Ruth Wilde Yacoub Khalaf Ermal Kirby Anne Lampe
Apologies	None	
Observers	None	
Staff in attendance	Peter Thompson Clare Ettinghausen Richard Sydee Rachel Cutting	Paula Robinson Debbie Okutubo

Members

There were 12 members at the meeting – eight lay members and four professional members.

1. Welcome and apologies

- 1.1.** The meeting was held on-line and with no members of the public present in light of the restrictions imposed as a result of the developing coronavirus outbreak and replaced the planned HFEA Authority meeting scheduled for the same day. This meeting would be considered an extraordinary meeting as allowed by HFEA standing orders.
- 1.2.** The Chair noted that the purpose of the meeting was to provide members with an opportunity to understand and support steps that have been taken by the Executive to address the implications for the regulatory activities and functioning of the organisation as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

2. Minutes of 29 January 2020 Authority meeting

- 2.1.** Members agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020 be signed by the Chair.

3. Chair's report

- 3.1.** The Chair noted that for the foreseeable future due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Authority meetings will be held virtually.

DHSC Gametes storage consultation

- 3.2.** It was agreed that the Executive would email or phone Authority members to gather any detailed comments in response to the DHSC gamete storage consultation.

Member appointment

- 3.3.** The Chair advised members that she had been appointed for a further term as Chair, which would end on 31 March 2021.
- 3.4.** The terms of office of a number of members will be coming to an end later in 2020 and early 2021. This includes, in 2020, the Chair of Licence Committee and in 2021, the Authority Chair, Deputy Chair, Audit and Governance and Statutory Approval committee chairs. Conversations were ongoing with the DHSC to try and manage that risk.
- 3.5.** Members commented that this was an ongoing risk that was very difficult to manage.

PRISM

- 3.6.** The Chief Executive outlined progress on PRISM. Members commented that, given the Coronavirus outbreak, contingency may need to be added to the completion plan in case key staff became unwell which could affect the project completion and launch date.

HFEA at 30

- 3.7.** The 30th anniversary of the HFE Act was later in 2020 and of the establishment of the HFEA in 2021. Further discussions would take place in due course to mark these milestones.

4. Coronavirus (Covid-19)

- 4.1.** The Chief Executive outlined the position as of the date of the meeting relating to the impact of Coronavirus on licensed centres
- 4.2.** Coronavirus was having a profound effect on fertility patients and clinics. Clinics were considering their capacity to provide treatment due to staff becoming ill or being redirected to front line care. The Executive were in touch with licenced clinics about whether any fertility treatment could continue. Given the speed at which the pandemic was developing, future regulatory action may need to be taken at short notice.
- 4.3.** It was noted that patients were understandably worried, some were putting off treatment, while others were worried about the safety of becoming pregnant.
- 4.4.** Members were advised that a letter had been sent out to all persons responsible (PR) to establish what contingency plans clinics had in place. Further regulatory actions may be needed as and when the UK situation changed. To date, the HFEA had been guided by UK professional guidance (BFS and ARCS). Members agreed that this was the right approach. It was noted that further advice from the BFS and ARCS was expected.
- 4.5.** The Authority noted that HFEA inspections had been paused until 31 August 2020 because of the current situation. Systems would be put in place to ensure that all clinics remained licensed and that inspectors would monitor those licenced centres where concerns had been identified.
- 4.6.** It was also agreed that the scheduled ELP, Licence Committee and SAC meetings would go ahead online for the foreseeable future.
- 4.7.** Public events had been cancelled and communications activity had been refocused on providing advice to patients and clinics on the impact of coronavirus on fertility treatment.

- 4.8.** The Business Plan for 2020-21 would be reviewed to ensure that it was re-focused given the coronavirus pandemic.
- 4.9.** Members were advised that all staff were now working from home as part of the government's advice.
- 4.10.** Members discussed the impact on ongoing organisational activity and the well-being of HFEA staff in the circumstances.

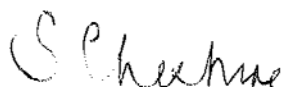
5. Any other business

- 5.1.** Members were advised that the next ordinary Authority meeting was scheduled for 13 May. An extraordinary Authority meeting would be held in April.
- 5.2.** Authority members to be canvassed for their availability.

6. Chair's signature

I confirm this is a true and accurate record of the meeting.

Signature



Chair: Sally Cheshire

Date: 21 April 2020