

Sent by e mail: acoba@acoba.gov.uk

5 May 2022

The Rt Hon. Lord Pickles
Office of the Advisory Committee on Business
Appointments
Room G/8,
1 Horse Guards Road,
London.
SW1A 2HQ

Watford General Hospital
Vicarage Road
Watford
Hertfordshire
WD18 0HB

Dear Lord Pickles

Thank you for your correspondence of 29 April 2022 regarding the appointment of Matthew Coats as the new Chief Executive of West Hertfordshire Teaching Hospital NHS Trust and with particular reference to the ACOBA process.

I understand your concerns particularly around public confidence and transparency and I can assure you that both of these requirements were at the forefront of my approach, coupled with a real need to maintain staff confidence.

It may be helpful to provide some context and describe some of the process and expectations when appointing to the role of Chief Executive of an NHS Acute Trust. You have highlighted that Matthew Coats was announced as the new Chief Executive at the public Trust Board on 7 April 2022. However, the interview and subsequent offer to Matthew was conducted a few days earlier.

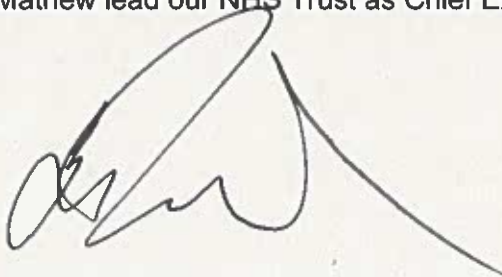
The appointment to the role of Chief Executive involves many internal and external stakeholders who all have a vested interest in this extremely important and crucial appointment to lead healthcare in West Hertfordshire not least of which is our role as a large employer in the area.

It would be expected that an announcement to a Chief Executive role would normally be provided to staff and stakeholders and the wider system within days following the final interview process. This is important for the credibility and stability of the Trust, as well as our partners. A number of days had elapsed without any announcement which was developing a risk to the credibility and transparency of the appointment. Therefore, I made judgment to make the announcement on 7 April to the executive of the organisation and its 5000 staff. That was made in good faith and with the best interests of the health economy at the heart of this decision.

It is unfortunate that this was inconsistent with the governance arrangements within the civil service and we take note to reflect on how this could be managed more effectively in the future.

We are grateful for the support provided in advising the Trust of the process and we are looking forward to having Mathew lead our NHS Trust as Chief Executive.

Yours sincerely



Phil Townsend
Chairman