

Chairs update for EGM 2025

Levy:

We have continued to gather feedback from many LMCs about the level at which to set the Voluntary Levy for the coming year. The backdrop to this conversation is sadly the ongoing and increasing pressures on General Practice. As we have continued to listen to a variety of voices, it is clear that circumstances have not improved significantly for Practices, despite the hard work of those leading our profession. To reflect the grave challenges that Practices are facing, the GPDF Board have made the decision to withdraw the adjourned motion from our 2024 AGM and will maintain the Voluntary Levy at 3p until the 2027/28 financial year.

Based on current expenditure and with the Levy at 3p, there will be a deficit for the year. We are fortunate to have reserves that can be used for this, but we appreciate that drawing on reserves in this way each year is not an ideal position or a long-term strategy to adopt, particularly in a time of global unrest as fluctuations in investments mean we may be better or worse off than current projections. This is particularly the case should unexpected needs arise that require additional draws from reserves. However, for the coming 12 months it feels important not to add additional financial pressure to GPDF members and their constituents. Please note that if there are significant, unforeseen changes to the financial landscape, either at GPDF, globally or within the GP community, then the levy figure may need to be revised according to the adjusted budgets following appropriate discussions with our members.

You will have hopefully seen from my newsletter that GPDF remains committed to reducing the reserves to £10 million, and we continue to listen to a wide spectrum of voices on how best to do this. We will be communicating over the next few months what we will be investing in to achieve this, in line with our members' feedback.

There are many unknown costs which mean that the Board is not totally able to predict future Budgets, particularly to allow us to have funds available to meet projects proposed by GPCs, and also defence cases for GPs. The figures within the newsletter, which is available on our website, demonstrate that a 3p levy rate for two years from 2025-2027 would reduce GPDF's reserves to about £15m which does not include capital gains tax on investments which will be covered by a presentation from Saracins later in the meeting.

You will have seen from our accounts and correspondence that our largest expenditure comes from funding conferences and the Deed of Grant, which limits how much we can reduce our outgoings. Much of this expenditure is guided by conference, which has meant committing to significantly increased costs when providing conferences in Newport, Glasgow & Belfast as demonstrated in recent correspondence. You will be voting shortly on two of our significant outlays, LMC

Support Network and Rebuild GP campaign and I'm sure are also aware of the recent vote at English LMC Conference for a Special Conference at an estimated cost of £100k.

In terms of running costs, you will see from the financial statements over the past few years that we have worked hard to reduce these costs (including insurance, back-office support, bookkeeping, directors, meetings) significantly to £323k. For context just the Director and staff costs in FY 2022 came to £519k. To briefly break down those figures, our directors get £875 gross per month which includes a monthly directors meeting plus whatever other work the role requires such as Deed of Grant negotiations, often squeezed in between clinics etc. My salary as chair for a nominal 3 sessions per week, which is often more like 5 to 6, is £4875 gross per month.

It would be remiss of me not to highlight the crucial role which Attend has played in reforming GPDF and keeping the ship sailing. Attend were brought in to provide a secretariat role that would bring all the expertise and services needed to run GPDF but without the large running costs of directly hiring and managing staff to provide this. Attend provide fantastic value for the £12,110 a month paid by GPDF and have generously offered much more in terms of time and commitment than they were originally tasked with.

Attend provides huge flexibility and in fact has at no point ever indicated it can't or won't do something – whatever the hour! Equally, Attend constantly juggles its diary to ensure it can always meet the many and varied demands of GPDF, delivering within timescales. Attend volunteers have also enthusiastically got involved, helping with day-to-day tasks, and ensuring momentum is kept behind activities. While they have been hosted, managed and guided by Attend, none of their expenses (travel to and from the office, lunch etc.) are charged to GPDF. If you haven't already, then I encourage you to meet and chat to one of the Attend team at conferences - where they kindly donate chocolate and sweets to keep us all going!

We would of course welcome feedback regarding other areas we could explore to reduce expenditure as part of our efforts to ensure that we deliver the best value for money possible from the Voluntary Levy contributions, particularly at a time when practices are under such pressure.

Withdrawal of benefits

There are 2 LMCs currently not in good standing, Rochdale & Bury LMC and Northumberland LMC, to whom we have fairly applied our policy of removing benefits paid for by GPDF from non levy payers. We are currently in negotiations with Northumberland LMC regarding returning to the GPDF community and hope to reach an agreement in the near future.

Following discussions with Rochdale & Bury LMC, the offer we received, which we were informed was non negotiable, fell considerably short of what the board felt was fair to other LMCs who negotiated mutually agreeable settlements for outstanding levy payments. Our door is always open to renegotiate this position and we hope that this is something we can revisit with Rochdale & Bury LMC in the near future.

DOG

You will hopefully have seen recent correspondence from the BMA on listserver regarding the BMA GP Committee funding through the deed of grant which has continued our respective organisations commitment to transparency.

We meet regularly with the BMA as part of the Deed of grant agreement, as well as secretariat meeting with BMA staff on a more frequent basis to ensure smooth day to day running of the relationship.

Regarding the Deed, we will be starting negotiations in May 2025, despite the current grant only being signed in April 2024 as we undertook an SEA following these delays and are cognisant that everything takes much longer than expected,

As we prepare to enter the early stages of negotiations, we invite feedback & concerns regarding what people want from the next iteration of the funding agreement. We can't promise we will be able to incorporate everything you ask but we will ensure that it captures the collective voice of LMCs.

Personal note

I would like to end this update with a personal announcement. After careful consideration, I have decided to step down from my position as Chair, effective 31st March 2025.

This was not an easy decision, but ultimately, I've come to realise that I'm no longer able to make the sacrifices required to dedicate the necessary time and commitment to this role. As many of you know, my wife and I are expecting a baby at the end of May and, after a particularly challenging pregnancy, my priority now must be my family. As such I feel that I cannot give the Chair position the attention it deserves while also fulfilling my family responsibilities. I believe deeply in this organisation and its mission, and I look forward to continuing to contribute to GPDF as Director for Wales.

I am grateful for the support and compassion the Board have shown me when discussing this decision and I am committed to ensuring a smooth transition and will work with the board to support my successor, Dr Roger Scott who was unanimously appointed to take over the mantle from 1st April 2025. I will, of course, remain available to assist in any way I can during the handover process.

I want to thank you all for your support during my time as Chair and in particular those of you who I have worked with on the Board. I have truly valued the opportunity to work alongside such a dedicated and talented team and am proud of the moral fortitude and courage exhibited by the team. I look forward to my ongoing work on the Board of GPDF.

Summary

- I will be stepping down as Chair, effective March 31st 2025, due to personal family commitments.
- I will continue on the Board as Director for Wales.
- Dr Roger Scott has been appointed by the Board as the new Chair.
- We've decided to maintain the Voluntary Levy at 3p until 2027/28 to alleviate financial pressure on practices, which will result in a deficit covered by our reserves.
- We are committed to reducing our reserves to £10 million and welcome feedback on how to achieve this.
- We've significantly reduced running costs, and I've highlighted the valuable contributions of Attend to the successful running of GPDF and support in reducing running costs.
- We've addressed the withdrawal of benefits from two LMCs and remain open to renegotiation.
- We reiterated our commitment to transparency regarding the Deed of Grant and invite feedback for upcoming negotiations.

As always we maintain an open and transparent dialogue with our stakeholders, and feedback is always welcome.

Dr Phil Cox