Executive Summary

The aim of this paper is to describe the activities and reputation of the Foundation Trust Governors’ Association (FTGA) so that Governors can decide whether or not they wish NEAS to subscribe to membership on their behalf.

1. Introduction

1.1 The FTGA is the national representative body for Foundation Trust Governors and works alongside Monitor and the Foundation Trust Network to support and develop the work Governors do. The Association is a membership organisation for Foundation Trusts and for those Trusts going through the authorisation process. The purpose of the Association is broadly three fold:

- To support and develop Foundation Trust Governors and to provide them with the knowledge and development opportunities to enable them to fulfil their roles as effectively as possible;
- To provide a voice for Foundation Trust Governors and to represent their interests;
- To help Foundation Trusts by providing essential support, updates and news to their Councils of Governors.

1.2 It represents over 3,000 Governors across England and Foundation Trust memberships in the hundreds of thousands. Current membership is 87 Foundation Trusts.

1.3 In order to carry out the mandate, the Chairman accepted an invitation to a ‘National Development Day’ in March. The event was well attended with more than 200 participants, mostly Governors but with a smattering of Chairs as well. There was a high-class selection of speakers, including the Chief Executives of Monitor, the Foundation Trust Network and the NHS Confederation; the Chair of Great Ormond Street Trust, and the NHS Medical Director. The day was divided between presentations and – for one hour at the end of the day – break-out sessions. An hour and a half at lunchtime provided good opportunities for networking. A panel debate lasting one hour, less the time taken by the 5 participants to introduce themselves, also gave a chance for Governors to ask questions from the floor.

1.4 The event itself was inconclusive in framing an opinion for the Chairman. On the one hand, it was well attended with a strong cast of speakers; on the other side, there was little real chance of engaging with the speakers and the break-out sessions were quite compressed.
1.5 As well as Development Days – and there is one scheduled for 8 June to be held in Durham – the FTGA provides ‘Essential Briefs’ and ‘Headline Briefs’ for members with the object of providing clear information on topical NHS issues. These publications are helpful and useful but, in reality, probably supplement information which is available from a range of other providers (including our own Trust).

2. **Value for Money**

2.1 At an annual cost of £3,300 (plus VAT) subscription is not exorbitant. However, the following points should be considered:

- Attendance at events is only likely to be available for a few Governors a year (a national event would involve travelling costs);
- The briefing material would only be supplied to the Trust and wider circulation would involve photocopying and further costs;
- Much of the information provided by FTGA is likely to be available from other sources.

2.2 The most important question would seem to be – what is the benefit for Governors? Trying to measure an answer from the Development Day, 3 out of the 5 break-out groups focussed on the Care Quality Commission, the Mid-Staffs story and Understanding Clinical Commissioning Groups. The remaining 2 were “Lead Governors – one of us or one of them” and “the relationship between Governors and Non-Executive Directors”. The Chairman’s verdict – inconclusive.

3. **Conclusion**

3.1 The Chairman has not been convinced by the material supplied by the FTGA, nor by his attendance at the Development Day, that membership is a ‘must’ for the Trust. That said, currently 87 FTs have subscribed representing over 3,000 Governors.

3.2 It would also be necessary, in order to reach an opinion, to examine what could be achieved by not subscribing but spending the money in different ways.

4. **Recommendation**

That Governors should absorb the information and decide for themselves how they would like to take this issue forward.