

## Minutes of the Board Meeting

**Date / time:** 25th March 2026, 5.00pm  
**Venue:** Via Zoom  
**Present:** Chair: Jonathan Jelley (JJ)  
Non-Executive Directors: Frances Dewhurst (FD), Ann Green (AG), Jonny Hebron (JH), Chris Palmer (CP) Philippa Brice (PB), Chelsia Lake (CL), Laura Beer (LB)  
Jess Slater (JS),

**Apologies:** Saqib Rehman (SR)

**In Attendance:** Lucy Kennedy (LK), Molly Hopgood (MH), Carole Rose (CR),  
Miranda Knell (MK)

### Introduction and apologies

1. JJ welcomed all Directors and staff to the meeting. He said it was fabulous to see a good number of staff members in attendance and asked Molly Hopgood, Lucy Kennedy and Miranda Knell to introduce themselves.

### Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in regards to this meeting agenda.

### Minutes of the previous meeting

2. The minutes of the meeting 19th December 2025 were agreed as accurate.

### Matters Arising

3. There were no matters arising or outstanding.

### Action Log

4. JS is still waiting to hear back from The Chamber of Commerce.

### Youthwatch Report

5. JJ commended MH for the report. He said that the work put into it and the continued development of the Youthwatch programme is excellent.
6. The report highlights Youthwatch's steady progress over the past year, particularly in terms of the strength and engagement with young volunteers and ensuring their voices are heard in areas where services for young people could improve.

7. JJ stated that It is very encouraging to see a gradual growth in participation, as well as an increase in the confidence with which young people are contributing to discussions so influencing real change.
8. MH updated about the work around issues faced by autistic young people which is a strong example of meaningful, tangible coproduction and the workshop held in March demonstrates constructive dialogue. Youthwatch are making a good contribution to ensuring the experiences of young people help shape the services.
9. MH said that young people had shared that their confidence had increased and they felt like their voice was really being heard since joining Youthwatch.
10. One young person is now interested in taking part in future Youthwatch podcasts. The podcast process is in its early days but they are starting to be approached more by organisations about working together.
11. MH feels that the enthusiasm and confidence of young people to engage in research has increased.
12. AG asked what Youthwatch are going to be focusing on over the next year. MH responded that they are thinking of a series of smaller projects. Potentially sexual health as one topic to start with this year.

The board noted the report and thanked MH for the impressive report and the work Youthwatch are doing.

### **Chair's report**

13. JJ said there is a lot of uncertainty about the organisation's future direction and changing landscape.
14. He noted his continued thanks for Jess and the whole team during this unsettling de-stabilising period and wanted to acknowledge the professionalism and commitment that everyone in the team is continuing to show and deliver, despite the uncertainty.
15. He expressed his active support and is fully engaged and ready to increase his time given to the organisation as the situation develops.
16. He thanked JS for her weekly updates, which are very helpful.

The Board noted the Chair's report.

### **Chief Executive's report**

17. JJ introduced the CEO report. He said it is clear that JS continues to move the organisation forward, despite a lack of clarity, clear timescales or transition arrangements, which he recognises creates challenges but also underlines the importance of the work JS and the team continue to do.
18. JJ stated that it is encouraging that despite the uncertainty, the organisation is just as active, influential and focused on impact. The influence and value of the organisation continues to be demonstrated through the range of engagement, strength of partnerships and volume of feedback gathered..

19. JJ thanked the team and invited JS to share any highlights.
20. JS stated that the Department of Health and Social Care have confirmed funding will be available until March 2027 at the earliest.
21. It was agreed at that last development session that an external review of the marketplace landscape will be done and JS is sourcing a consultant for this.
22. JS asked if the board is happy with the length and structure of the CEO report. It was agreed that JS would send weekly email updates and will make the CEO report shorter and more concise.

No further questions were raised in relation to the CEOs report.  
The Board noted the report and thanked JS.

### **General Purposes Group (GPG) report**

23. JJ introduced the report from GPG held on 11th March 2026.
24. AG confirmed that she has now stepped down and FD has taken over as Chair of the GPG.
25. JJ thanked AG for her contribution to the GPG and recognised the important work she has done. He also thanked FD for stepping into the role.
26. FD updated that there is currently a high staff turnover and she recognises that personal circumstances can make it difficult to work for an organisation that has an uncertain future. Gratitude was expressed to staff that are staying with the organisation.
27. Safeguarding policy – Although Healthwatch is not a high risk organisation it is a trusted organisation, which brings risks as there is an environment where people may disclose issues which have to be dealt with.
28. FD encouraged everyone to look at the code of conduct policy as it impacts everyone and she reminded the Board of the importance of maintaining political impartiality preceding local elections.
29. There may not be the capacity to do the Summit this year. JS is going to have a discussion with the commissioners about this.

**Action** – JS to raise the possibility of not having a Summit in 2026 with the commissioners

The Board noted the report with thanks.

### **Monthly Accounts to end February 2026**

30. JS updated that the organisation is in a sound and stable financial position. The income has held up well and expenditure has been carefully managed.
31. The forecasted year-end result is significantly better than originally budgeted. It is reassuring to see the finances remaining strong, with healthy reserves and good cash flow.
32. The financial stability gives the board flexibility with decisions that need to be made in the future once the situation clarifies.

33. JH asked how quickly money can be available in the event of needing to use it for redundancy payments. JS confirmed that cash is in a current account and CAF account, which is immediately accessible. Two deposits have been moved from a 12 month account to 6 months, so withdrawals can be made penalty-free after 6 months.
34. The organisation has no other long term liabilities.

**Forecast and Budget for 2026/2027**

35. It is a cautious budget that reflects uncertainty and the income assumptions are in line with the current year.
36. Expenditure – the budget includes provisions to do things as they emerge in order to prepare for possible organisational change but costs will be carefully controlled.
37. The budget continues to assume that the organisation will manage resources responsibility while maintaining core functions. The organisation is in a stable position with sufficient reserves to manage potential transition costs.
38. This gives the board reassurance that the organisation is planning sensibly for a difficult and uncertain year ahead.
39. The board approved the 4% staff pay increase subject to receiving relevant Purchase Orders from the commissioners.

**Action** – JS to contact commissioners to chase PO numbers and confirm income.

**Any Other Business and Public Questions**

JJ thanked everyone for attending and for the work they continue to do every day, particularly given the difficult situation.

No questions had been submitted by the public in advance of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 18:23.