



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Ymddiriedolaeth Brifysgol GIG
Gwasanaethau Ambiwylans Cymru
Welsh Ambulance Services
University NHS Trust

ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

INTRODUCTION

1. The Trust's Standing Orders and Committee Terms of Reference require that Board Committees evaluate their effectiveness annually and present an annual report to the Trust Board.
2. As the factors underpinning effective governance can change, for example as people leave, organisations restructure, or strategy shifts, regular reviews of Board Committees ensure governance remains fit for purpose.
3. Standing Orders, Committee terms of reference, and Codes of Governance provide that Boards should routinely assess the effectiveness of their governance arrangements, of which the Board's Committees form an integral part.
4. The Committee met on 16 January 2024 and reviewed its terms of reference, responses to questionnaires completed by members and attendees, and its operating arrangements. Discussions were also held with the Committee Chair and Executive Lead ahead of that meeting. This Annual Report reflects on the effectiveness of the Committee in 2023/24 and proposes changes to terms of reference.

PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

5. The purpose of the Committee set out in its terms of reference reflects the maturing University Trust Status (UTS) journey and the fact that this is still a newly established committee that approaches its remit with a mixture of *scrutiny* (particularly with respect to refreshed UTS priorities, obtaining and maintaining UTS status), *partnering* (ensuring the right partners are on the Committee, that appropriate arrangements are in place with partners), *connecting* (existing and new partners to research/programmes of work in WAST), and *inquisitorial* (drilling down into

elements of the priorities and other programmes where we are partnering with academic and industry to foster and promote).

MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE

- The Committee met four times as scheduled in 2023/24 and was quorate on each occasion. The Committee met once in private session in January 2024.
- The Committee has been supported by the Chair and three Non-Executive Directors as members, and a number of core attendees. The chart below illustrates attendance of members and attendees as listed in the terms of reference for 2023/24. The Committee welcomed non prescribed attendees at various meetings as well as external guests.

COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE				
Name	25 April 2023	15 August 2023	24 October 2023	16 January 2024
Hannah Rowan				
Prof Kevin Davies				
Paul Hollard				
Martin Turner				
Estelle Hitchon				
Angela Lewis		Catherine Goodwin		
Andy Swinburn				
Leanne Smith		Jon Hopkins		
Jonny Sammut				
Jonathan Turnbull-Ross				
Duncan Robertson				
Nigel Rees				
Chris Evans				
James Houston				
Jo Kelso		From item 5.4		
Trish Mills				
Mark Marsden				
Keith Rogers				
Academia Rep				

	Attended
	Deputy attended
	Apologies received
	No longer member

- Attendance is steady with new members joining this year who have provided a positive and different lens on the work of the committee from a research, innovation, learning and strategic perspective. Leanne Smith was replaced as prescribed attendee when she completed her interim position when Jonny Sammut joined as Director of Digital. Hannah Rowan took the Chair for this Committee from 1 April 2023.

9. The Committee did not have a representative from academia in 2023/24, but a successful campaign saw the appointment of an academic Non-Executive Director in 2023.
10. No changes to membership are proposed at this stage other than the removal of the 'representatives from academia' as the original intent of that member has been fulfilled by the academic Non-Executive Director.

COMMITTEE'S VIEWS ON EFFECTIVENESS

11. The Committee's effectiveness was assessed through a review of its terms of reference, responses to a questionnaire, discussion with the Chair and Executive Lead, and at the 16 January Committee meeting.
12. The questionnaires provided an opportunity to gauge opinion on areas of good practice and areas that require improvement. Twenty questionnaires were sent out with 14 responses being returned (a 70% return rate which is similar to 2022/23).
13. Respondents were asked 27 questions and were encouraged to provide free text answers to explain or expand on their choices. The responses were reviewed by the Committee on 16 January against the same questions from last year. They discussed the need for clarity on the purpose of the Committee which was raised by a number of respondents and was a position that had not improved in the responses from 2023/24. These ranged from those proposing more of a focus on learning, on how to benefit from the existing partnerships, and the exploration of new partnerships with academia and industry, to a more focused application of academic research and innovation. This perhaps reflects new membership in 2023/24 and that this Committee is still finding its feet. It is anticipated that in 2024/25 the work of the Committee will benefit from a more certain understanding of our University Trust Status and the expertise of a Non-Executive Director from academia both on the Committee and the Board.
14. Good practice drawn out in responses included:
 - Engagement and participation overall rated good and Board engagement has improved
 - Overall good balance of key areas and appropriate remit for the Committee
 - Flexible and evolving nature of the committee appreciated
 - Behaviours reflected in meeting with supportive members
 - Work is reflective of the Trust's strategic priorities
 - Effective in implementing decisions and actions, closing off items, reporting to Board and reflecting on meeting

- Paper quality is good
- Excellent and collegiate chairing of meeting and reporting to the Board on key activities
- Definite feeling of progress in terms of the Committee's operations and effectiveness

15. The Committee has a cycle of business that is aligned to its terms of reference. All matters scheduled for oversight and review have been brought to the Committee and in this respect it has discharged its responsibilities in providing assurance to the Board. The Committee's business in 2023/24 included:

- (a) Establishment of a **task and finish group** which developed a strategic approach to the attraction of candidates to the Non-Executive Director position on the Board and this Committee, including role profile and candidate pack. The group also liaised with Welsh Government on the timing and process of the award of University Trust Status (UTS) and logistics related to the change of name and brand.
- (b) UTS was discussed extensively and the **priorities for the 2023-26 IMTP** related to UTS agreed. Additionally, the priorities for the 2024-27 IMTP were reviewed with a desire for the UTS priorities to better reflect the space the Committee is now moving into and the ambition to foster a culture of democratised learning and promote a more commercial lens.
- (c) The **Life Sciences Hub** presented on their current priorities and opportunities for strategic alignment, with the executive taking a collective focus on areas that will make the biggest difference to our patients and our people.
- (d) One of the Committee priorities this year was to focus on the adoption and implementation of the **new Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Research and Development Framework**. Colleagues showcased the significant amount of research and innovation underway at the Trust. There was a desire from members to proactively focus research and innovation efforts towards our strategic objectives, exploring how this approach might address some of the challenges being faced by the Trust and NHS bodies in Wales more widely.
- (e) A **self-assessment against the HCRW Framework** was reviewed and it was agreed that a key element of moving this forward will be the refreshing of the clinical strategy and a separate but linked research and innovation plan. Succession planning and capacity was a subject of some discussion with HCRW and members, and the need to build on the existing but small team and support the wider organisation getting involved in research and innovation - not as a separate role but embedded into job descriptions and

business as usual. The Committee will continue to monitor the maturity of the framework and support the refreshing of the research and innovation plan in 2024/25.

- (f) The Committee Chair, Hannah Rowan, was appointed as **research champion** and is active in this role.
- (g) **The Research and Innovation Report 2022/23** was presented to the Committee and provided to the Board. The report included a range of policy developments, projects, and activities conducted and reported through the Research and Innovation Department.
- (h) A further iteration on a **mapping exercise** that was commenced in 2022 was reviewed, illustrating the breadth of partnerships and projects in which colleagues across WAST are involved. This, together with the **innovation dashboard**, showed extensive involvement in research, innovation and commercial relationships from the clinical, quality, finance, fleet, estates, digital, and people and culture directorates.
- (i) An update was provided on the **income generation workstream** under the financial sustainability programme in private session. It was noted that the Finance and Performance Committee have oversight of this area of work however this Committee will keep a close eye on a mindset shift towards embracing commercial opportunities where appropriate as part of this work.
- (j) The Committee **cycle of business** was approved.
- (k) The Committee received a presentation on **inter-professional simulation-based education and training** which is a pan-Wales project based on collaboration with the NHS and social care. The project seeks to reduce variability across the system and takes a whole workforce approach which is aligned to WAST's desire to democratise learning and research. The Committee thanked all those who were involved in this project and will continue to follow its roll out to a wider audience following peer review and academic publication.
- (l) Craig Brown Specialist Clinical Lead for 111 (North) shared his **personal and professional journey of pursuing a PhD in public health and leadership**, with the support of Bangor University and WAST (particularly Mike Brady, Consultant Clinician and Nigel Rees, Assistant Director of Research and Innovation). Craig highlighted the benefits of this pathway for his own development, the 111 service, and the wider research community within WAST.

(m) There are no formal **risks** on the corporate risk register for this Committee, however the risks related to capacity to take forward the research and innovation agenda were discussed

(n) The **annual effectiveness review** was conducted in the January 2024 meeting.

16. Audit Wales observed the Committee as part of their 2023 Structured Assessment work and did not identify any concerns either in that report or separately on the effectiveness of meetings.

17. The Board received a highlight report from this Committee by email circulation following each meeting which included alerts, advice, and areas of assurance. This was also presented to the next public Board meeting by the Chair of the Committee.

TASK AND FINISH GROUP

18. The Committee is not currently serviced by a Sub-Committee but has established the task and finish group noted in this report. That group met regularly, developed a work plan and reported against that work plan to this Committee. Members were assured that it was functioning effectively and its remaining tasks which related to the handling of conflicts of interest of the appointed Academic Non-Executive Director, and the timeframe and logistics around the change of name on conferring of UTS were completed in March 2024.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

19. Extensive changes to the Terms of Reference for this Committee were made during the effectiveness reviews held in 2022. The changes this year are therefore minimal and include feedback from the Committee following the survey and the meeting on 16 January. The changes in the Terms of Reference are marked up in [Annex 1] and include a change to the purpose statement and a reduction in the Non-Executive Director membership of the Committee from four to three (including the Committee Chair).

20. It was felt that there was potential to change the name of the Committee given its wider remit and that that would be considered during 2024/25 once the academic Non-Executive Director has joined the Board.

21. In addition there will be some changes to operating arrangements which include:

- (a) Drawing out the reporting and assurance with more particularity where possible, including elements of external reporting
- (b) Clarity of reporting of key metrics for Research and Innovation, and legislative compliance
- (c) Risk reporting where appropriate (an action carried over from the 2022/23 review)
- (d) UTS remit of the Committee clarified once granted
- (e) Arrange meetings to take place at education and training facilitates to develop understanding & improve visibility
- (f) Report from chair following research champion events
- (g) Continue work on research governance framework with a focus on its implementation at WAST
- (h) Clarity on the purpose and focus of the Committee to be communicated to the wider organisation (an action carried over from the 2022/23 review)

COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

22. The Committee received an update on progress against its priorities at each meeting and reviewed overall progress at the October meeting via the mid-year UTS review. The Director leading each UTS priority is an attendee at the meetings.

23. As can be seen below, progress on agreed priorities has been good:

Priority	Progress
Task and Finish Group to scope out the next 12 months to UTS (including partners, any reciprocal arrangements, conflicts, name change, legislative docket).	The Group has held five meetings and reported to the Committee on a AAA report. An update on UTS progress was provided to the October meeting. The academic NED role profile was endorsed by the Committee in August and the non-executive director recruitment activity has begun. The academic role is out to advert with a closing date of the 29 October 2023. The Group closed its work in March 2024 and provided a close out report in April 2024.
Focus on the research governance framework, which is a new area of oversight for the committee.	A paper was received by the Committee on the Research Governance Framework at their August meeting. The Framework was adopted, and it was asked that all departments within the Trust conduct a self-assessment against the Framework. An update on the Framework return to the Health Council Research Wales was before the Committee at the October and January meetings. Future research governance activity / business will be considered within the agenda setting for the Committee.

24. It is good practice for Committees to set priorities for the forthcoming year when they review their effectiveness. Accordingly, the Committee has agreed the following priorities for 2024/25:

- (a) Risk reporting where appropriate.
- (b) Review the name of the Committee during 2024/25.
- (c) Clarity on the purpose and focus of the Committee to be communicated to the wider organisation

25. Progress on priorities will be reported to the Committee quarterly and to the Board through its highlight report.

NEXT STEPS

26. The next steps are as follows:

- (a) Ensure changes to operating arrangements agreed at paragraph 21 are cycled into work programme for review in 2024/25
- (b) Update the cycle of business with revised terms of reference

RECOMMENDATION

27. The Trust Board is requested to

- (a) Receive and note the contents of the Committee Annual Report for 2023/24 and analysis of its effectiveness; and
- (b) Approve the changes to the Terms of Reference.