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

**WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICES UNIVERSITY NHS TRUST
CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE
OPEN MEETING HELD AT THE MUMBLES ROOM, MATRIX HOUSE
AND REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON 6 MARCH 2026**

Meeting started at 10:30

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Hannah Rowan	Non-Executive Director and Committee Chair
Jayne Beeslee	Non-Executive Director
Hayley Hutchings	Non-Executive Director
Jonathan Chippendale	Assistant Director for Clinical Development
Keith Dorrington	Assistant Director Digital *(Deputising for Jonny Sammut)*
Ceri Griffiths	Deputy Director of Remote Clinical Care
Estelle Hitchon	Director of Partnerships & Engagement
Jo Kelso	Head of Workforce Education and Development
Carl Kneeshaw	Director of People
Mark Marsden	TU Representative
Nigel Rees	Assistant Director of Research & Innovation
Andy Swinburn	Executive Director of Paramedicine
Julie Boalch	Assistant Director of Corporate Governance & Risk *(Deputising for Trish Mills)*

ATTENDEES:

Sarah Harland	Corporate Governance Officer

APOLOGIES:

Trish Mills	Director of Corporate Governance/Board Secretary
Jonny Sammut	Director of Digital Services

OPENING ITEMS

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND QUORUM

1.1 Apologies from Trish Mills and Jonny Sammut were noted. Quorum was confirmed.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 Nigel Rees identified the need to update his Declarations of Interest in relation to an external role at Warwick University, and his involvement with National Institute for Health and Care Research, and agreed to follow this up with the Corporate Governance Team.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2025

3.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Academic Partnership Committee held on 7 October 2025 were received and approved.

4. RATIFICATION OF CHAIR'S ACTIONS (APC ToR & Responsible Research Development Annual Plan 2025-2030)

4.1 The Chair reported on actions taken on behalf of the committee since the previous meeting, noting that these were necessary due to the sequencing of this year's quality governance review activity and that a decision was required decision before the next meeting. It was reported that Chair's Action had been taken to:

- Review and endorse the amended Terms of Reference for the committee, reflecting changes arising from the Quality Governance Review; and
- Review and endorse the Responsible Research Development Five Year Plan 2025–2030.

4.2 Both the revised Terms of Reference and the Responsible Research Development Five Year Plan had subsequently been approved by the Board at its January 2026 meeting.

4.3 The amendments to the Terms of Reference aligned with previously agreed changes to committee responsibilities. The primary amendment was the transfer of education and training collaborations to the People & Culture Committee and commercial partnerships to the Finance & Performance Committee effective 01 April 2026. The APC will retain oversight of research and innovation activities within the Trust.

The committee ratified the two decisions made by the Chair's Action on 20 January 2026.

5.1 ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING

5.1.1 The committee received and reviewed the Action Log and noted that there was one outstanding action remaining. It was reported that, on the recommendation of Leanne Smith, Action 55/24 [Research Governance Framework] had been progressed as far as possible and was now appropriate to be closed. The Committee agreed to close the action and noted that there were no further open actions remaining.

5.2 AAA HIGHLIGHT REPORT FROM 7 OCTOBER 2025 MEETING

5.2.1The AAA Highlight report from the meeting on 7 October 2025 was noted.

ITEMS FOR ASSURANCE, DISCUSSION OR APPROVAL

6. RESPONSIBLE RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT FIVE YEAR PLAN 2025-2030

6.1 Nigel Rees provided a verbal update on the Responsible Research Development Five Year Plan 2025–2030, advising that the plan forms part of the Trust’s contractual requirements with Health and Care Research Wales, and provides a strategic framework for embedding research across the organisation.

6.2 Nigel reported that the plan had been developed collaboratively with input from Directorates, aligned with national and Welsh research policy, and adopted the UK Research and Innovation approach to responsible research and innovation. Nigel emphasised that the plan is intended to be owned by the whole organisation, not solely the research function, and highlighted its focus on governance, financial stewardship, workforce development, patient-centred research and effective communication of research impact. It was noted that the plan had been endorsed via Chair’s Action and subsequently approved by the Board in January 2026.

6.3 Hayley Hutchings welcomed the plan, commenting that it was a robust and high-quality piece of work and reflected positively on the Trust’s research activity. Hayley highlighted the importance of ensuring alignment with wider organisational planning, including the Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP), and queried how workforce capacity and fatigue would be managed in supporting increased research engagement. Nigel acknowledged workforce capacity as an ongoing challenge and explained that mitigations include designing studies to align with existing clinical workflows, avoiding duplication of data collection, and providing support through research officers. Nigel also emphasised the importance of fostering a culture of enquiry and demonstrating the practical impact of research on patient care.

6.4 The Chair endorsed Hayley's comments, noting that the Trust "punches above its weight" in relation to research activity, and formally thanked Nigel and his team for their work on the plan. The Chair also recognised Hayley's contribution in her role as Research Non-Executive Director and Research Champion.

6.5 Jayne Beeslee commented on the need to ensure that the plan is appropriately aligned with both the IMTP and longer-term strategic planning, and that research and innovation are not lost within evolving governance arrangements. The Chair reflected on Jayne's point, noting the importance of ensuring that research remains visible and appropriately assured within future governance structures, while avoiding the risk that it becomes everyone's responsibility, but no one's remit.

6.6 Estelle Hitchon highlighted the value of broadening participation in research and innovation, noting that recognising work not traditionally defined as research helps to democratise engagement and embed research more widely across the organisation. Estelle also welcomed the increased visibility of research activity and its potential links to future innovation and commercial opportunities.

6.7 Nigel outlined the complexities of commercial research and intellectual property, emphasising that commercial activity should not be viewed as a panacea and that the Trust's priority remains on patient benefit. Jonathan Chippendale provided practical examples of how the Trust can derive value through collaboration, such as preferential access or reputational benefit, rather than direct financial return.

6.8 Julie Boalch emphasised that, while the committee does not own the plan operationally, it has a key role in seeking assurance on delivery and impact, highlighting the importance of appropriate metrics and reporting to demonstrate that it is being implemented consistently and effectively.

6.9 The Chair concluded the discussion by thanking Nigel and members for their contributions and reiterating that research and innovation should be regarded as an organisation-wide responsibility.

The committee noted the update relating to the Responsible Research Development Five Year Plan 2025-2030.

7. NHS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENT 2026 (including the impact of WAST Research)

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

7.1 Nigel Rees presented an update on the NHS Research and Development Framework Assessment 2026, explaining that the framework supports a consistent approach to monitoring performance and impact across agreed research domains and underpins external assurance reporting. Nigel highlighted the accompanying impact materials, noting their role in clearly articulating the outcomes and benefits of research activity, and described the recent use of a "spotlight" approach to showcase research activity within the Operations Directorate, including strong engagement in nationally significant studies.

7.2 Carl Kneeshaw supported the use of the spotlight approach, agreeing that it was helpful and endorsing the proposal to continue highlighting research and innovation activity across different Directorates in future reporting. Julie Boalch emphasised the importance of monitoring research and innovation activity over time and highlighted the committee's role in seeking assurance on delivery, impact and risk, noting the need for clarity on the Trust's risk appetite for research-led change and alignment with strategic objectives through appropriate metrics and reporting. Estelle Hitchon commented on the importance of broadening and democratising research, highlighting that recognising and supporting enquiry-based and improvement activity alongside formal research encourages wider participation and helps embed research more fully across the organisation.

7.3 The Chair emphasised that the framework applies across the whole organisation and is not limited to the research function. The Chair also highlighted the value of the impact materials in presenting research outcomes in a clear and accessible way, supporting wider organisational understanding and assurance. The Chair thanked members for their contributions and noted that the discussion reinforced the importance of the framework in supporting organisational learning, assurance and the visibility of research impact.

The committee noted and discussed the content of the NHS R&D Framework – Assessment template current status 2026 v1 report [Annex 1] and the Impact of WAST Research v1 23.02.26 [Annex 2]; and endorsed the continued self-assessment against the framework within the Trust.

8. QUALITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW 2025/26

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

8.1 Julie Boalch advised that the full Quality Governance Review had been presented to the committee in October 2025 and that, as agreed, the 2025/26 Annual Report and Cycle of Business were before the Committee for approval, in advance of submission of the full Quality Governance package to the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee in April 2026. Julie emphasised the importance of ensuring that governance structures below Board and Committee level are fit for purpose, enabling effective delivery of strategy and providing clear assurance, escalation and oversight.

8.2 Jayne Beeslee expressed concern that, as governance arrangements continue to evolve, there is a risk that focus on research and innovation could be diluted, noting the significant work undertaken to raise the profile of this area and the importance of maintaining appropriate visibility and oversight in future governance structures.

8.3 The Chair acknowledged these concerns, recognising the tension between embedding research and innovation across the organisation while ensuring clear accountability and assurance. The Chair also emphasised the value of the depth and quality of discussion achieved by the committee and the importance of retaining appropriate visibility, oversight and assurance for research and innovation as governance arrangements develop. The Chair thanked members for the discussion, confirmed that the points raised would be captured through the governance review process, and noted that the committee was content to proceed on the basis outlined.

The committee approved the draft Annual Report at Annex 1 and the draft Cycle of Business for 2026/27 at Annex 2.

9. UPDATE FROM RESEARCH NED

9.1 Hayley Hutchings reported that she had reviewed and written the foreword to the Responsible Research Development Five Year Plan, attended a recent Research and Development team meeting to gain insight into current activity, and confirmed her ongoing engagement with Welsh Government and research champion networks, including upcoming meetings and the Health and Care Research Wales conference.

9.2 The Chair welcomed the update, noting the value of Hayley's external perspective and connections, and highlighted the importance of early sight of emerging opportunities, funding and national developments to support the Trust's research ambitions.

9.3 Nigel added that Hayley's involvement as Research Champion provides valuable advocacy and visibility for the Trust's research activity, strengthening external relationships and supporting alignment with national research priorities.

The Committee noted the update from the Research NED.

CLOSING ITEMS

10. REFLECTIONS

10.1 Members reflected positively on the meeting, highlighting the breadth and visibility of research activity across the Trust and the value of shining a light on work taking place across both clinical and corporate functions. Members noted the importance of making research and innovation accessible and inclusive, supporting wider engagement across the organisation. The recognition of the Trust's apprenticeship model was also highlighted as an example of good practice and impact. Members also reflected that the discussions reinforced the Trust's strong research culture and the importance of continuing to share learning and impact more widely.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Jo Kelso advised members that the Trust had recently been recognised as Apprentice Employer of the Year by Skills Academy Wales as part of Apprenticeship Week. It was noted that Skills Academy Wales identified the Trust as a key contributor to its success, highlighting the Trust's unique position in Wales as both an employer and training provider, and the strong performance and outcomes of its apprenticeship programmes. The committee welcomed the update and noted the recognition as a significant achievement.

12. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

12.1 18 September 2026 at 9am.

MEETING CLOSE: 11:45
Following the meeting, members engaged in a tour of the Education Suite, conducted by Jo Kelso and her team.