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

WELSH AMBULANCE SERVICES NHS UNIVERSITY TRUST
UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE PEOPLE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON 5 MAY 2026

Meeting started at 09:30

PRESCRIBED ATTENDEES

Ceri Jackson	Non-Executive Director and Committee Chair
Hayley Hutchings	Non-Executive Director
Hannah Rowan	Non-Executive Director
Lee Brooks	Executive Director of Operations
Christian Fox	Trade Union Partner
Estelle Hitchon	Director of Partnerships and Engagement
Jo Kelso	Head of Workforce Education and Development
Carl Kneeshaw	Director of People
Angela Lewis	Director of Culture Change
Mark Marsden	Trade Union Partner / WASPT Co-Chair
Trish Mills	Director of Corporate Governance/Board Secretary
Lizzie O'Shea	Speaking Up Safely Guardian
Andy Swinburn	Executive Director of Paramedicine
Chris Turley	Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources
Damon Turner	Trade Union Partner
Marcus Viggers	Trade Union Partner

IN ATTENDANCE

Hugh Bennett	Assistant Director of Commissioning and Performance *(Item 12)*
Kat Cobley	Head of Inclusion and Engagement
Sarah Harland	Corporate Governance Officer
Sara Mills	Head of Culture and OD
Lianne Onslow	Head of Strategy Workforce Planning, Systems & Recruitment
Sarah Parry	Business Manager, People and Culture
Alex Payne	Corporate Governance Manager
Liz Rogers	Deputy Director of People and Culture
Graham Stockford	Deputy Head of Health & Safety *(Item 13)*
Felicty Quance	Internal Audit, NWSSP

APOLOGIES

Bethan Evans	Non-Executive Director
Penny Durrant	Deputy Director of Nursing, Quality and Governance
James Houston	Assistant Director for Planning and Transformation

OBSERVING

Alison Kelly	Business Manager
Toni-Marie Norman	Business Manager
Charlie Bosher	Recruitment Manager

OPENING ITEMS

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND QUORUM

1.1 Apologies were received as set out above. Quorum was confirmed.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 The Chair advised that a declaration previously provided in March, relating to the completion of her direct roles with the Stroke Association, had not yet been reflected in the Register of Interests but was in the process of being updated.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 10 FEBRUARY 2026

3.1 The minutes of the public meeting of the People and Culture Committee held on 10 February 2026 were received and approved.

4. ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING

4.1 The Action Log was reviewed and discussed, with updates added to the log.

ITEMS FOR ASSURANCE, DISCUSSION OR APPROVAL

5. DIRECTORS UPDATE

The paper for this item is in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

5.1 Angie Lewis paid tribute to Carl Kneeshaw at his final People and Culture Committee meeting, thanking him for his contribution over the past 18 months. Angie said it had been *"an absolute joy"* working alongside him and noted that she would miss delivering the Director's update jointly at future meetings.

5.2 The committee noted Angie's update, which highlighted the Trust's growing external influence and leadership in the people and culture agenda. This included national recognition of work led through staff networks, particularly the *Purple Space Network*, with the *Neurodiversity Pledge* showcased at the Ambulance Leadership Forum. Also, the *Women's Network*, which delivered a successful programme of events to mark *International Women's Day*.

5.3 Assurance was provided on progress with Speaking Up Safely, including the development of a detriment risk assessment approach to support colleagues raising concerns, which has attracted interest from Welsh Government as potential best practice. The update also highlighted continued progress on inclusive recruitment, with positive engagement outcomes from Contact Centre open days delivered with the Black Ethnic Asian and Minority (BEAM) network.

5.4 The committee further noted activity to support leadership wellbeing. This included the delivery of a senior leadership session focused on self-care and sustainable leadership, and welcomed the continued emphasis on culture, staff engagement and reputation across the wider ambulance sector.

5.5 The committee noted Carl Kneeshaw's update, which provided assurance on workforce planning, skills mix and education commissioning. Carl outlined the rationale for the decision not to appoint Newly Qualified Paramedics (NQPs) and to pause commissioning of the full-time direct entry Paramedic Science course for 2025/26, noting this reflects revised workforce demand, improved retention, a changing clinical model and financial pressures. Assurance was provided that internal progression routes remain unaffected and that ongoing discussions and actions are in place to support affected graduates.

5.6 The committee noted ongoing work with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), Welsh Government and system partners to explore future workforce solutions, alongside internal actions including flexible working options, recruitment mitigations and system-wide deployment approaches. Progress was also noted on the "Your Best" People Development Programme, supporting career pathways, learning and retention.

5.7 Finally, Carl updated on the All-Wales Disciplinary Policy, which went live on 1 April 2026, highlighting its alignment with the Avoidable Harm Programme and the focus on psychological safety, fairness and improved staff experience, supported by targeted awareness sessions for managers.

5.8 Members welcomed the mitigating actions following the decision not to appoint Newly Qualified Paramedics (NQPs) and asked about the duration of the pause to the full-time Paramedic Science course and how it would be reactivated. Carl advised that the decision rests with HEIW and is currently expected to be for one year to avoid a "feast and famine" approach to workforce supply. Carl reaffirmed the Trust's commitment to retaining the course in Wales and confirmed that work continues with HEIW and university partners to use the interim period constructively, including supporting graduates' continuing professional development (CPD) and employability. Carl added that university contracts remain in place for the next 12 months and that the intention is for the course to resume next year, subject to wider system factors.

5.9 Members reflected on feedback from staff visits, highlighting the tension for managers between compassionate leadership and performance expectations, particularly when balancing individual needs with service delivery. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring managers feel supported to make fair and sometimes difficult decisions in the wider interests of patients and the organisation. Carl Kneeshaw and Lee Brooks acknowledged this inherent tension, emphasising that compassionate leadership involves balancing individual circumstances with business and patient need, supported by early intervention, managerial capability, and access to People Services and OD support.

5.10 The Chair welcomed the discussion, noting that it reflected the strategic role of the committee in considering this balance and provided assurance, while recognising the need to remain mindful of long term sustainability in the context of financial pressures.

6. OPERATIONS REPORT Q4 2025/26

The paper for this item is in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

6.1 The committee noted the Operations Update, which provided assurance on progress and challenges across operational portfolios. Lee Brooks reported that work continues in response to culture reviews, with themes aligned to staff survey feedback and further actions in development. Ongoing attendance challenges within Contact Centre services were noted, with joint action planning underway with People Services.

6.2 The committee received updates on operational developments, including Integrated Care changes, 111 rostering reform, successful estate relocation to Matrix House and the implementation of the Single Clinical Queue, with additional support in place following go-live. Progress on the Time Off In Lieu (TOIL) pilot, Specialist Operations Response Team (SORT) workforce expansion, and revised arrangements for mandatory training compliance were also noted, alongside assurance on the continued delivery and value of Quality and Support Days. Angie Lewis commented on the value of the Quality and Support Days, noting the rich intelligence generated, and committed to strengthening the link between this insight and staff survey communications, to demonstrate how staff feedback continues to inform action.

6.3 Members welcomed the report and provided positive feedback on its content and insight. Hannah Rowan highlighted the analysis on early clinical assessment (referred to in the report) as particularly helpful in demonstrating how changes can safely reduce conveyance while providing assurance on risk. Hannah also noted the significant progress made through the Putting Things Right recovery work, seeking assurance on how improvements will be sustained; this was acknowledged as an issue to be considered through appropriate quality governance routes.

6.4 The Chair reflected positively on the progress reported, particularly the TOIL approval rate, which was recognised as an important wellbeing indicator, and welcomed the additional context provided on the challenges associated with mandatory training compliance. The Chair suggested that opportunities to further tailor operational reporting to People and Culture matters could be explored outside the meeting.

7. STAFF EXPERIENCE (NOT PRESENTED AT THIS MEETING)

8. STAFF EXPERIENCE UPDATES (BEN COLLINS – CULTURE REVIEWS)

8.1 Angie Lewis provided an update on the staff experience item presented at the previous meeting. Ben Collins has continued to apply his learning and development in relation to cultural change within his new role in Emergency Preparedness and Special Operations. Angie highlighted this as a strong example of how cultural learning is being embedded and sustained beyond the original staff experience session. Ben continues to work closely with the People and Culture team and has been invited to contribute to external engagement, including a planned presentation at the Emergency Services Show, to share his experience and learning in support of wider organisational and sector learning.

9. 2025 NHS STAFF SURVEY UPDATE

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

9.1 Members received an update on the 2025 NHS Staff Survey, which highlighted a significant increase in response rates, and a small but positive improvement in engagement scores, providing reassurance given the larger and more representative sample.

9.2 The committee welcomed improvements across key areas, particularly patient safety and speaking up, while noting ongoing challenges relating to workload, capacity, systems and infrastructure. It was emphasised that 2026 represents a critical year, with a need to demonstrate meaningful change to sustain momentum and avoid regression in future survey results.

9.3 Members welcomed the transparency of the findings and acknowledged progress, while highlighting that negative lived experiences remain for some staff, particularly in relation to behaviour, fairness and speaking up. Angie provided assurance that deeper analysis is underway, including by directorate and protected characteristics, and that known areas of concern are being actively addressed.

9.4 Members supported the identification of three organisational priorities (workload and capacity; leadership and management behaviours; and fairness and career opportunity) and welcomed continued triangulation with other intelligence sources, including quality and support days and staff engagement activity.

The committee noted the contents of the report; commented on insights shared; endorsed the three organisational priority areas aligned to Care, Connect and Value Everyone; championed a whole-organisation approach; and supported utilisation of the results to meaningfully inform decision-making and action.

10. PEOPLE AND CULTURE PLAN METRICS UPDATE AND WORKFORCE SCORCARD

The paper for this item is in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

10.1 The committee noted the update on People and Culture Plan metrics presented by Carl Kneeshaw, including performance data relating to disciplinary cases, respect and resolution, job evaluation, recruitment, training compliance, leadership development and sickness absence.

Members welcomed the progress reported, particularly improvements in job evaluation timelines, statutory and mandatory training compliance, and the continued uptake of leadership development activity.

10.2 Member feedback focused on the importance of capacity and sustainability, including the impact of investigation timeliness on staff experience and the ongoing challenge of sickness absence in some operational areas. Members welcomed the enhanced analysis of sickness absence, including financial and workforce impacts, and supported the continued focus on targeted interventions and cross-directorate working to improve attendance. Overall, assurance was provided that trends are being actively monitored and that actions are in place to support continued improvement.

The committee received the People and Culture Plan Metrics Update and Workforce Scorecard and noted the progress to date.

11. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: JOB EVALUATION

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

11.1 Carl Kneeshaw advised that the internal audit on Job Evaluation received an overall *Reasonable Assurance* rating and was welcomed as a constructive review of progress since the 2021 audit. Carl noted that a diagnostic review undertaken in January 2025 identified the causes of previous backlogs and informed an action plan focused on strengthening capacity and sustainability.

11.2 Carl acknowledged that delivery had been impacted by resource constraints, including staff absence, leadership change and increased organisational change activity. Carl reported that significant progress has been made, with backlogs now cleared and processing times improved. Carl confirmed that the audit findings and management actions are accepted, deadlines are considered realistic, and that regular updates will continue to be provided, with no significant concerns identified.

11.3 Members noted that the report had been received by the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee on 28 April 2026, who welcomed the reasonable assurance opinion, noting the clear improvement from the previous audit

The committee received assurance from the reasonable assurance rating of the Job Evaluation Internal Audit Report.

12. MONTHLY INTEGRATED QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE REPORT (MIQPR)

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

12.1 The committee received the MIQPR update, presented by Hugh Bennett. Hugh advised that this would be the final report in its current format as work progresses to further refine performance reporting, including clearer alignment with ambitions set out in the Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP) and the introduction of performance trajectories. Hugh highlighted that overall Trust performance remains stable, with familiar themes across workforce metrics, including sickness absence, statutory and mandatory training, and PADR completion rates. Further work is underway to strengthen data quality, experiential measures and triangulation of people, patient and performance insight.

12.2 The Chair asked if any of the known data issues referenced in the report related to People and Culture metrics, and whether those had now been resolved. Hugh advised that the most significant data challenges do not relate to People and Culture metrics, but instead reflect capacity constraints within information and performance systems following the pace of organisational change. Hugh highlighted experiential and outcomes data, particularly clinical outcomes, as a key area for future development, noting that this is a recognised gap and work is planned to address it through a task-and-finish approach.

12.3 The Chair welcomed the update and the planned evolution of reporting, noting that trajectory based reporting will support committee oversight, even where judgement is required. The Chair also welcomed confirmation that People and Culture metrics are being considered as part of the improvements work.

The committee received the March 2026 MIQPR update.

13. HEALTH & SAFETY AND VIOLENCE & AGGRESSION REPORT (JANUARY – MARCH 2026)

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

13.1 The committee received the Health and Safety, and Violence and Aggression report for the period January - March 2026 presented by Graham Stockford. Graham highlighted ongoing workforce capacity pressures within the Health and Safety team, noting that prioritisation had ensured delivery of the most critical elements of the work programme. The report identified a continued prevalence of violence and aggression incidents, particularly verbal aggression, with higher reporting levels linked to Contact Centre activity within Betsi Cadwaladr and Aneurin Bevan areas. It was confirmed that affected staff are offered support, with active case management in place where required.

13.2 Members noted improvements in DATIX reporting compliance and welcomed the increased acceptance rate of personal injury claims through the Welsh Risk Pool (WRP) following strengthened review processes. The committee also noted progress on estate safety assurance, infrastructure projects, partnership working with Trade Unions, and the risk-based approach to workplace assessments.

13.3 Members reflected on the impact of wider system pressures and community frustration on staff experience, acknowledging that while a direct correlation has not yet been assessed, continued focus is required on prevention, staff support and mitigating the impact of sustained aggression on staff experience and wellbeing.

The committee noted the content of the Health and Safety and Violence and Aggression report and supported the continued focus on improving compliance, reducing environmental risk and strengthening staff engagement on key health and safety measures.

14. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT: WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

14.1 The committee received the Welsh Language Standards internal audit report, noting an overall *Reasonable Assurance* rating. Trish Mills reported that strong foundations are now in place, including clear roles and responsibilities, an established Welsh Language policy, consistent statutory reporting and positive engagement with the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office. Members also noted particular progress in embedding Welsh language considerations within NHS 111 and digital services, and ongoing work to develop a five-year Clinical Consultation Plan aligned to Welsh Language Standards.

14.2 Members welcomed the positive assurance and recognised the progress made despite limited dedicated resources. Feedback highlighted the importance of strengthening governance and monitoring arrangements, improving cross directorate engagement, and ensuring complaints data is fully captured and reviewed. Trish provided assurance that management actions are in place to address identified gaps, and that further updates will be provided through existing governance routes.

14.3 Members noted that the report had been received by the Audit Risk and Assurance Committee on 28 April 2026, who welcomed the reasonable assurance opinion, noting the clear improvement from the previous audit.

The committee received assurance from the reasonable assurance rating of the Welsh Language Standards Internal Audit Report.

15. WASPT AAA HIGHLIGHT REPORTS: 22 JANUARY & 18 MARCH 2026

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

15.1 The committee received the WASPT Highlight Reports from the 22 January and 18 March 2026 meetings. Mark Marsden advised that no alerts were escalated from either meeting. Key areas of discussion included progress on violence and aggression, work to strengthen the industrial injury claims process, and ongoing social partnership engagement, including delivery of partnership development sessions.

15.2 The committee noted updates on workforce skills mix, including work on the future role of Emergency Ambulance Practitioners (EAPs), assurance that no redundancies are planned, and continued collaboration with Trade Union partners. Progress was also highlighted in relation to IMTP development, financial planning assumptions, and actions to address shift overruns, with early signs of improvement reported and a partnership approach agreed to coordinate related workstreams.

16. RISK MANAGEMENT AND BOARD ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

16.1 Trish Mills presented the Risk Management and Board Assurance Framework (BAF) report, explaining that the report included the introduction of a new combined People and Culture *Risk 680, Failure to prioritise people capability and organisational culture could result in deteriorating Employee Experience*, *reduced wellbeing and absence* and is currently rated at 16, with a target score of 12. Angie Lewis added that work is ongoing with Julie Boalch to further develop and refine the risk, noting that this is an evolving piece of work and that the direction of travel is positive. The committee noted the comprehensive articulation of controls, gaps and mitigating actions, providing improved clarity and assurance.

16.2 *Risk 163 Maintaining Effective and Strong Trade Union Partnerships* remains on target, with actions progressing as planned. It was noted that work is underway to further align risks and assurance reporting to *Strategic Objective Two Enabling Our People to Be the Best That They Can Be*, with early progress reflected in the evolving BAF presentation.

16.3 The committee welcomed progress in aligning BAF risks more closely to strategic objectives, and noted ongoing work to further refine the strategic risk and assurance reporting framework to support effective oversight. The Chair welcomed the progress made and thanked all involved for the work undertaken. The Chair noted that while the refreshed approach provides improved assurance, this remains an area requiring continued focus and oversight, particularly in the context of wider system pressures.

The committee received assurance that risks have been reviewed in quarter and that work continues to strengthen the supporting detail of the new Risk 680, and the strategic risk aligned to Strategic Objective Two.

17. AUDIT TRACKER Q4 2025/26

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

17.1 The committee noted the Audit Tracker report for Q4, presented by Trish Mills. Trish explained that the report comprises a revised reporting approach focused on high priority actions and actions at final revised deadlines, rather than the full audit tracker. Trish added that this approach aims to support more proportionate and meaningful oversight, with assurance that robust internal processes and audit follow-up arrangements are in place.

17.2 The Chair welcomed the revised approach, noting that it improves clarity and supports effective committee oversight by focusing attention on areas of highest risk.

The committee noted the Audit Tracker Q4 2025/26 update report.

CONSENT ITEMS

18. AAA HIGHLIGHT REPORT 10 FEBRUARY 2026

18.1 The committee received the AAA Highlight Report from the meeting held on 10 February 2026.

19. CYCLE OF BUSINESS MONITORING REPORT Q1 2026/27

The papers for this item are in the committee pack in IBabs and on the Trust's website, therefore detail of the content is not repeated here.

21.1 Members noted the update to reporting from the Cycle of Business Monitoring Report Q1 2026/27.

CLOSING ITEMS

20. REFLECTIONS

20.1 Members reflected on the richness of information and intelligence presented throughout the meeting, while recognising that discussion at times became operational in nature. Members reflected on the inherent challenge of balancing detailed operational insight with a strategic, system-level perspective, particularly in relation to workforce pressures, leadership capacity and cultural change. There was recognition that the Trust is at a critical point in sustaining momentum on culture and people-focused improvement against a backdrop of financial constraint, and that continued focus, challenge and coherence across reporting will be essential to avoid regression and to support long-term organisational resilience.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

21.1 The Chair thanked Carl Kneeshaw for his significant contribution to the committee, commending his openness, challenge and leadership, and wishing him well as he prepares to step away from his role at Welsh Ambulance Services NHS University Trust.

22. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

22.1 The next meeting is on 11 August 2026 at 9:30am

MEETING CLOSE: 12:20