

AGENDA ITEM 1

**Healthwatch England Committee Meeting
Held in PUBLIC**

**MS Teams Meeting and in Person at
2nd Floor 2 Redman Place, Stratford**

Minutes of Meeting No. 54 – 27 January 2026

Present

Professor David Croisdale-Appleby (DCA)	HWE Chair	Item 1.6 & 1.9
Belinda Black (BB)	Co-Chair Committee Member	
Jane Laughton (JL)	Committee Member	Item 1.7
Dr Joanna Bircher (JB)	Committee Member	
Debbie Bartlett (DB)	Committee Member	

In Attendance

Chris McCann (CM)	Acting HWE Chief Executive	Item 1.4
Ben Knox (BK)	Head of Communications	
Gavin Macgregor (GM)	Head of Network Development	
Sandra Abraham (SA)	Head of Operations, Finance & Development	Item 1.8
Carmen Fuertes-Riestra (CFR)	Strategy, Planning & Performance Manager	
Clara Duval (CD)	Business Support Coordinator	

Apologies

Will Pett (WP)	Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research & Insight	
Rebecca Curtayne (RC)	Acting Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research & Insight	
Professor Sultan Mahmud (SM)	Committee Member	

No.	Agenda Item	Action Lead
1.1	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The Chair opened the formal public session of the Committee meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were received and noted.</p>	
1.2	<p>Declarations of Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>No Declarations of interest were made.</p>	
1.3	<p>Minutes and Actions from previous Meeting</p> <p>The draft minutes were reviewed. One correction was noted in section 1.8, confirming that the AFRSC update was related to 28 November rather than 1 December. Subject to this amendment, the minutes were approved. The action log was reviewed, and all actions were confirmed as completed.</p> <p>Updates to action(s) were as follows:</p> <p>There were no actions requiring an update.</p>	
1.4	<p>Chief Executive Report: Chris McCann (CM)</p> <p>CM presented the report, noting that organisational change continued to be managed sensitively despite a challenging environment. SA and colleagues were recognised for their leadership and professionalism.</p> <p>The organisation continued to influence the wider health and care system positively, including work linked to contract negotiations and national guidance. Members acknowledged the sustained performance of staff, especially considering upcoming departures, and recognised the strong leadership shown throughout the process. Improved communications reach was noted, alongside the ongoing challenge of balancing rising demand with capacity.</p> <p>The Chair thanked CM, and the committee noted the report.</p>	
1.5	<p>Committee Members' Report</p>	

No.	Agenda Item	Action Lead
	<p>Committee members were invited to provide updates. No additional reports or issues were raised.</p>	
<p>1.6</p>	<p>Chair's Report</p> <p>The Chair gave an update on recent activity. Ongoing engagement with universities was noted, particularly discussions about uncertainty in health and social care policy, workforce planning, training capacity, and future job prospects across clinical professions. The Chair also referred to conversations with Laura Finley on wider system and process issues.</p> <p>Members noted that CQC activity had slowed, moving from regular meetings to a current hiatus, with no meetings currently scheduled. This was linked to the recruitment of a new Chief Executive, with Briony Cox in the interim role. The Chair highlighted continued efforts to influence inspection approaches, especially the need to better use patient and public insight alongside other evidence.</p> <p>Engagement with MPs was also discussed, including opportunities to support new MPs to connect with their local communities. While there were some concerns about how upcoming elections might affect this work, the importance of maintaining relationships and being ready to engage was emphasised.</p> <p>The committee noted the update.</p>	
<p>1.7</p>	<p>Audit, Finance and Risk Sub-Committee Update: Jane Laughton (JL)</p> <p>JL provided an update, noting that the most recent meeting was informal due to limited attendance. It was confirmed that AFRSC business would now be incorporated into the main committee, making this the final standalone update. Finance remained stable; the risk register has been reviewed and updated, and discussion on next year's budget took place on a provisional basis.</p> <p>The Chair thanked JL, and the committee noted the update</p>	

No.	Agenda Item	Action Lead
1.8	<p>Business Plan Performance and KPIs Report for Q3 2025/26: Sandra Abraham (SA)</p> <p>SA presented the report, confirming strong performance against the business plan. 18 projects had been completed and 17 remained on track, with none paused or unlikely to be delivered.</p> <p>Projects no longer proceeding have been removed from reporting to maintain focus on active delivery. Members commended the team’s ability to adapt and deliver priorities effectively.</p> <p>The Chair thanked SA and the committee noted the update.</p>	
1.9	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>The Committee discussed future scheduling, agreeing to hold committee meetings every two months, with workshops arranged flexibly between to allow deeper discussion when required. Members stressed the need to remain responsive to emerging policy developments while reserving dates in advance where possible.</p>	
	<p>Questions from the public</p> <p>No questions were raised by the public.</p>	
	<p>AOB</p> <p>It was noted that the March meeting would be the final meeting of the current committee. Members agreed it would be appropriate to mark this subject to practical and budget considerations.</p>	
	<p>The Chair concluded the public meeting.</p>	

Scroll down for Actions

HEALTHWATCH ENGLAND PUBLIC COMMITTEE MEETING - ACTION LOG 27 January 2026

AGENDA ITEM	LEAD	ACTION	UPDATE	DEADLINE	STATUS
1.3 Minutes of Previous Meeting	SA	Ensure that section 1.8 of the November minutes (AFRSC date amended to 28 November) is reflected in the final approved version.	Amendments have now been made to the AFRSC minutes	January 2026	Complete
AOB	SA / CM	Explore and propose an appropriate way to mark the final committee meeting in March, subject to logistical arrangements and budget considerations.	Arrangements for the committee meeting in March have now been finalised at the Hyatt Hotel	January 2026	Complete