

AGENDA ITEM 1

**Healthwatch England Committee Meeting
Held in PUBLIC**

**MS Teams Meeting and in Person at
3rd Floor, Bow Suite, Hyatt Regency Stratford
10A Chestnut Plaza, Westfield
London, E20 1GL**

Minutes of Meeting No. 55 – 24 March 2026

Present

Professor David Croisdale-Appleby (DCA)	HWE Chair	Items 1,2,3,5,6,8 & 9
Belinda Black (BB)	Co-Chair Committee Member	
Jane Laughton (JL)	Committee Member	
Dr Joanna Bircher (JB)	Committee Member	
Debbie Bartlett (DB)	Committee Member	

In Attendance

Chris McCann (CM)	Acting HWE Chief Executive	Item 4
Ben Knox (BK)	Head of Communications	
Gavin Macgregor (GM)	Head of Network Development	
Will Pett (WP)	Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research & Insight	
Rebecca Curtayne (RC)	Acting Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research & Insight	
Carmen Fuertes-Riestra (CFR)	Strategy, Planning & Performance Manager	Item 7
Josephine Buckle (JB)	Executive Personal Assistant (Minutes)	

Apologies

Sandra Abraham (SA)	Head of Operations, Finance & Development
Professor Sultan Mahmud (SM)	Committee Member

No.	Agenda Item	Action / Lead
	<p>CM highlighted the continued influence that Healthwatch England holds across national policy issues including GP contracts, the Virtual Trust model, and community engagement guidance.</p> <p>He emphasised the staff professionalism during ongoing organisational change and the positive feedback from staff teams, trade unions, and CQC HR.</p> <p>Feedback on the Public’s Perspective report was highly positive across the sector, with named endorsement from stakeholders showing strong confidence in the outputs.</p> <p>A discussion followed focusing on local Healthwatch anxieties regarding the future operating model.</p> <p>CM reiterated that DHSC has not yet provided sufficient details to allow further updates.</p> <p>Committee discussed the shifting timeline for the future Health and Care Bill, noting movement from February to April and now likely May. The political change and wider governmental pressures were acknowledged as risks to further delays.</p> <p>CM confirmed that staff engagement sessions will continue to ensure transparency.</p> <p>The Chair thanked CM, and the committee noted the report.</p>	
1.5	<p>Committee Members’ Report</p> <p>Committee members were invited to provide updates. There were no additional reports or issues raised.</p>	Chair (DCA)
1.6	<p>Chair’s Report</p> <p>The Chair updated the committee on recent engagement activities, including a two-day visit to Healthwatch Hampshire, Healthwatch Portsmouth, and Healthwatch Isle of Wight.</p> <p>The sessions were well attended, with volunteers, staff, and board representatives participating. Longer-than-scheduled discussions reflected concerns about the future Healthwatch structure and national policy uncertainty.</p>	Chair (DCA)

No.	Agenda Item	Action / Lead
	<p>The Chair also highlighted concerns that communications issued by Healthwatch England may not always be fully read or understood locally.</p> <p>Siobhain McCurrach’s (Healthwatch Area Director, Hampshire, Portsmouth) report to the Portsmouth and Isle of Wight meeting was commended as exemplary, and HWE Leadership Team was asked to ensure it is obtained and circulated.</p> <p>The Chair informed that a follow-up visit to the Isle of Wight is scheduled for April.</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HWE Leadership Team is asked to obtain and circulate Siobhain McCurrach’s report to the Portsmouth and Isle of Wight meeting. <p>The committee noted the update.</p>	<p>HWE LT</p>
<p>1.7</p>	<p>Business Items: Carmen Fuertes-Riestra (CFR)</p> <p>a) Update: Business Plan Performance and KPIs Report for Feb 2026</p> <p>CFR presented an in-depth review of current-year’s performance against KPIs, noting that 20 projects have now been completed. Work is underway to finalise the new business plan for the coming year (2026/27).</p> <p>BK provided analysis of communications trends, noting reduced organic search traffic due to sector-wide algorithm changes, balanced by strong performance of insight-led content.</p> <p>Committee discussed the implications of a future transition to a new national structure on communications strategy.</p> <p>The Chair thanked CFR, and the committee noted the report.</p>	<p>CFR</p>
<p>1.8</p>	<p>Forward Plan</p> <p>The Chair proposed that planning for future agenda items should be coordinated via email to ensure reflective contributions from all committee members. This approach was agreed.</p> <p>The next Committee meeting is scheduled to take place on 21 May and will be held online.</p>	<p>CM / Chair (DCA)</p>

No.	Agenda Item	Action / Lead
	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee members to submit or share suggested agenda items for the forward plan via email to the CM. • JB to circulate the Teams joining details for the online HWE Committee meeting on 21 May. 	<p>Comm / MC</p> <p>JB</p>
<p>1.9</p>	<p>Questions from the public</p> <p>There were no public questions received in advance or during the meeting.</p>	<p>Chair (DCA)</p>
<p>1.10</p>	<p>AOB</p> <p>Committee agreed to hold the HWE Committee Workshop online on 28 April 2026</p> <p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JB to send out calendar invite with Teams joining details and confirm the HWE Leadership Team attendance. 	<p>Chair (DCA)</p> <p>JB</p>
	<p>Committee Farewell Event at Hyatt</p> <p>The Chair delivered a personal and professional message of thanks to Debbie Bartlett and Dr Joanna Bircher, recognising their significant contribution, commitment, and dedication to the remit and purpose of the Healthwatch England Committee.</p> <p>Committee members and the Healthwatch England Leadership Team also expressed their sincere appreciation for Debbie and Joanna’s valued input, highlighting the positive impact of their work and the lasting contribution they have made to the organisation. They extended their warmest wishes for their future endeavours.</p>	
	<p>The Chair thanked all attendees for their contributions and formally closed the HWE Committee Public meeting.</p>	

Scroll down for Actions

Committee Public Meeting Action Log – 24 March 2026

RAG Status:

Complete

On Track

Minor delay

Severe delay

Agenda Item	Lead	Action	Progress	Deadline	Status
Agenda Item 1.3: Minutes and actions from committee meeting – 27/01/26	Chris McCann	CM to circulate the King’s Fund Report summary to Committee members.		April 2026	
Agenda Item 1.6: Chair’s Report	Leadership Team	HWE Leadership Team is asked to obtain and circulate Siobhain McCurrach’s report to the Portsmouth and Isle of Wight meeting.		April 2026	