

MINUTES
of a meeting of the Governance Board
20 January 2026
(13:00-15:55)
At St James House

Present:

Anne-Marie Dean, Chairman
Ian Buckmaster, Company Secretary
Ron Wright, Non-Executive Director
Jenny Douglass, Community Support Officer

Carol Dennis, Jenny Gregory, Dawn Ladbrook, Di Old, Val Perry and Members

1 Welcome and apologies

All members were present.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations.

3 Minutes of meeting held 11 November 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record and the Chairman was authorised to sign them.

4 Finance Report

(a) November

The report was submitted.

Expenditure for the month had been £6,290, below the current monthly average, as the result of the inadvertent pre-payment in October of rent for the office and pension contributions that would have been due in November.

The bank balances at the end of the month were noted.

It was noted that £2,400 had been transferred to the reserves (Savings) account on 1 December.

(b) December

The report was submitted.

Expenditure for the month had £8,117, which was below the current monthly average, and brought the average monthly spend this year to £9,406.

Interest of £65 had paid to the Reserves on 8 December. Bank balances at the end of the month were noted.

£6,100 had been transferred from the reserves (Savings) account on 2 January, to fund expected expenditure in January, with a further transfer of £600 made on 20 January.

(c) Employment Allowance

The rebate of employer's National Insurance Contributions (NICs) is almost exhausted and it was expected that, from next month, payments to HMRC would resume. A recent communication from HMRC suggested, however, that more of the rebate remained to be used; clarification would be sought as to the correct position.

5 Future of Healthwatch

National position

The current indications were that the Parliamentary Bill for the new legislation required to implement the government's proposed changes to the NHS, including Healthwatch services, might now be introduced into Parliament during February, although progress with it was unlikely before the commencement of the new Parliamentary session in the Spring.

The majority of the Healthwatch network was continuing to press for changes to ensure that an independent voice for patients and service users would be retained.

Despite that, Healthwatch England as an organisation, although it would remain in operation until the legislation changed, was reducing the number of staff it employed and reducing its activities to its core function, supporting local Healthwatch. A new CEO was now in post there.

The Government had recently confirmed the allocation of funds to local authorities for Healthwatch during 2026/27, at the same level as the current year.

6 Havering Place-based Partnership (HPbP)

As part of the overall reorganisation of the NHS – see the following minute – the structure of the NHS locally was changing as the ICB's role changes and more responsibility was delegated to local levels ("Neighbourhoods").

At the recent Board meeting, presentations had been received about the difficult positions of Citizens' Advice and Havering Council.

7 NHS North East London/North East London Health and Care Partnership

Zina Etheridge had now left NHSNEL as Chief Executive, and the Interim CEO was Ralph Coulbeck. Formal consultations on new organisational and clinical structures for NHSNEL were about to close, following which decisions would be made about the future shape of the ICB.

These actions were the consequence of the government's intention of "slimming down" ICBs across the country as their focus changed to "strategic commissioning", with more responsibility taken at local ("Neighbourhood") level and by provider Trusts, such as BHRUT and NELFT.

8 Live Well booklet – legal disclaimers

During a presentation about the Live Well Havering scheme at the Awayday in December, a question had been raised about whether the various organisations mentioned in the Live Well booklet had been "vetted" to reassure users that they were genuine and unlikely to place service users at risk.

Live Well had now advised that the booklet contained a disclaimer to the effect that Havering Council did not endorse any service in the booklet (or on the Joy directory website) and that users should make their own enquiries or seek advice as appropriate, nor did the Council accept any liability for losses incurred. They had explained that the Safeguarding Board had agreed that it would be a greater safeguarding risk to attempt to vet and quality assure services and not do it properly (due to lack of resourcing to achieve this - it would require a team of people to effectively achieve this) and that, if a safeguarding concern were raised about an organisation on the platform, it would immediately be removed pending an investigation.

The point had been made that many of the services in the booklet and in the Joy Directory were provided by the NHS, Public Health and nationally known voluntary organisations.

9 Safeguarding and Quality – update

Ms Old reported that a residential home in the borough had notified a cockroach infestation, which was worrying. Quality and Assurance meetings were operating in a new format and much less information about individual homes was now discussed.

Arising from the report, the Chairman thanked Ms Old for her diligent attendance at the meetings over the past years. She suggested that it would be useful to produce an over-arching report about the numerous Enter & View visits that Healthwatch had undertaken, especially at residential care and nursing homes over the past 13 years, highlighting the findings that had been published. A useful rapport had been built up with the homes' managements that had led to improvements for residents.

10 Engagement projects - update

- **Long COVID**

- Following the approval of funding for the development of the existing Long COVID Cafés organised by Everyone Active into a more supportive, clinically supported activity, one session had recently been held successfully, with a further session due in March. The project would then be formally evaluated to ascertain whether the programme should continue.

- **Enter & View visits**

- A visit had been carried out at the Eastbrook Surgery (formerly Rush Green surgery – Dr Poolo) in December but a visit to Romford Care Centre due in January had been postponed following outbreaks there of 'flu and other winter ailments.
- Visits to the Oak Road Surgery and follow up visits to The Paddocks and Cherry Tree (ELIFAR) were in hand.

- **Defibrillators in Havering**

- The report was being finalised.

- **Public transport services to St George's Health and Wellbeing Hub**

An approach to Transport for London about improving public transport links to the St George's Hub was in hand following the rejection of the proposal for an alternative route for Superloop Bus service SL12.

- **Safer Surgeries**

- This project had recently been activated. The intention was that all GP practices in North East London, including Havering, would be contacted to ascertain their policies and procedures for registering

new patients. Members would be asked to contact groups of practices by telephone and go through a questionnaire with them.

- **Wards providing care of the elderly**

- This project, organised by HW Redbridge, which we are supporting, had been postponed until March. It was noted that BHRUT had raised some questions with Redbridge about the data protection of individual patients.

- **Maternity Services review**

- The Review Team had been provided with details of some local organisations that had been worked with in the past to enable them to make contact. In addition, the BHRUT Maternity and Neonatal Patient Voices team had arranged a “listening event” at MyPlace in Harold Hill early in February to enable patients to have their say.

11 Next meeting

The next meeting would be on 17 February 2026, at the office.

12 Havering Contract for provision of Healthwatch Services

The Board held a confidential discussion of matters relating to the Council’s contract for the provision of Healthwatch Services from 1 April 2026, set out in the Confidential Appendix to these minutes, which has not been published.

_____ Chairman