



Business Board Meeting
Friday 20th March 2026, 13.30-15.30
Unit 7, Witney Way, Boldon Business Park

Present:

John Lowther (JL)	Chair	Tracey Grainger (TG) Director
Arthur Mckean (AM)	Vice Chair	Carl Buckley (CB) Director
Sheila Scott (SS)	Operations Manager	
Bev Cook (BC)	Business Support/Engagement Officer (minute taker)	

Agenda Item		Actions
1	<p><u>Welcome and apologies for absence</u></p> <p>JL welcomed all to the meeting.</p>	
2	<p><u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>No new declarations of interest declared.</p>	
3	<p><u>Minutes of the last meeting held on 15th December 2025</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The minutes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting. <p><u>Matter arising from the minutes</u></p> <p>Pg3 SS asked whether there had been any update following correspondence by JL to the Chief Executive of STSFT, Anna Hargrave and the Patient Experience Group in December. JL confirmed that no further feedback had been received. As an action JL would follow this up.</p>	JL
4	<p><u>Finance Report</u></p> <p><u>Management Accounts</u></p> <p>SS circulated the updated management accounts prior to the meeting via email.</p> <p>It was clarified that the management accounts are additional work carried out on a quarterly basis by Quantum Accountancy.</p> <p>From April there will be an increase from £312 to £330 PCM.</p> <p>To produce payroll and the monthly P&L will cost £280 PCM.</p> <p>Because HWST monthly expenditure is fixed, Quantum would be asked what the cost would be to continue to undertake the monthly payroll and produce one set of Year End Accounts, which is the only statutory requirement when producing management accounts.</p> <p>CB offered to produce the Profit and Loss for the Board.</p>	SS SS/CB

	<p><u>Income and Expenditure</u></p> <p>The accounts up to the end of January 2026 were made available prior to the meeting and were discussed and noted.</p> <p>SS informed everyone of the annual increases due as of April 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual Insurance – increase of £115 ● Business Rates – increase of £800 	
5	<p><u>Items for Information</u></p> <p><u>Chairs Update</u></p> <p>An update had been shared with the Board prior to the meeting.</p> <p><u>Operations Managers Update</u></p> <p>SS gave a verbal update.</p> <p>Enter and View – Eight Specialist Homes update. Visits now completed. One report has been finalised which includes the managers response.</p> <p>Current outstanding reports include 7 Specialist Homes, the annual Have Your Say and Young Peoples Mental Health.</p> <p>Following discussion, it was thought that it might be better to keep some reports back to be shared next year, 2026/27 as sending out too many reports at one time might mean that they are overlooked.</p> <p>SS informed the Board that the South Tyneside Alliance Committee and the Living Well Alliance are being stood down whilst the ICB implement their structural changes. The ICB will be setting up a new group. SS has requested HWST be invited to join this group.</p> <p>JL advised that the Patient Experience Group is becoming more formal with members being asked to share an annual report. It was noted that HWST already do this.</p>	<p>SS</p> <p>SS</p>
6	<p><u>Items for Discussion:</u></p> <p><u>Healthwatch South Tyneside Contract 2026-27</u></p> <p>The contract from STC has been signed. SS waiting for the purchase order number to be able to raise the first invoice.</p> <p>SS had recently been asked about HWST funding coming from South Tyneside Council. SS has ensured that all correspondence following this conversation makes it clear that HW funding comes from the Department of Health and Social Care.</p> <p><u>Potential Closure of Healthwatch and staff terms</u></p> <p>Appeals to the closure are being raised across the HW Network. There are 4 Healthwatch which are independent, HWST, HW Hartlepool, HWNT and HW Darlington.</p>	<p>SS</p> <p>SS</p>

	<p>CB suggested having a conversation with South Tyneside Council about possible continuation of the service after the closure of HW.</p> <p>JL – discussed the importance of gaining legal advice on the position of HWST should Tupe be an option for staff. SS confirmed that Tupe does not apply.</p> <p>JL thanked HW staff for their patience as staff terms had been discussed extensively. TG – Suggested that the Board need to make decisions around staff redundancy and asked the question had it not previously been agreed to seek employment advice. JL confirmed that two quotes have been received but the decision was made by the Board that no further action would be taken until things were clearer. SS informed the Board that the Lead Officer at HW County Durham shared information that HWCD Board are discussing starting the winding down of the business from December. It was agreed to include the winding down of HWST during discussions with solicitors when a meeting takes place.</p> <p>JL – listed areas for discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Winding down HWST ● Duties of directors ● Articles of Association ● Responsibilities <p>JL expressed his thoughts of making sure that HWST staff are comfortable in their jobs and agree to work to the end. It was agreed that the challenge for the Board is to not put themselves in a position where the business is insolvent. JL confirmed that corporate advice could be available within two weeks. CB pointed out that HWST is in a practical situation where it can afford the staff redundancy proposal previously discussed. He asked that the conversation be revisited and for the Board to agree so that this can then be taken to the law firm. JL suggested that the outlined proposal drafted by TG stand. JL will forward this to the corporate solicitors and a Teams meeting be arranged over the next couple of weeks with Board members and the solicitor, where a decision will be made as quickly as possible to finalise plans. CB asked that any reserves and the Articles of Association be discussed with the corporate solicitors. Whilst discussing the closure it was noted that the Carers Federation, based in Gateshead, were involved with the setting up of HWST. JL agreed to check closure rules regarding finances in the Articles of Association and HWST Standing Orders. TG reminded everyone that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A transition plan will need to be written with input from South Tyneside Council. 	<p>ALL</p> <p>JL</p> <p>JL</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comms will have to go to the public around when HW are not here, what the local area is doing and who to direct the public too. Conversations with the council around handover of corporate material. <p>CB initiated a conversation around pension contributions as a suggestion for staff when considering redundancy options.</p> <p><u>Enter and View Visits to Eight Specialist Homes</u> This was discussed earlier in the meeting. SS circulated the first completed report with the Board and confirmed that the remaining 7 reports will follow the same format. An overall report covering all 8 specialist homes will be drafted which will also be shared with the Quality Assurance Team at South Tyneside Council.</p> <p><u>Marketing Costs</u> It was agreed that for the remainder of HW the services of Cian Creative PR will continue.</p>	ALL SS SS
7	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>TG highlighted the risks associated with low Board Member numbers. Any further Board resignations would mean that future meetings would not be quorate. JL put the option to the Board to recruit new members or reduce the quorate.</p> <p>A Board resolution - Board members agreed to commit to the end and agreed to reduce the quorum number to 3 to enable Board business to continue in case of illness.</p> <p><u>Healthwatch Annual General Meeting</u></p> <p>HWST AGM has been planned for Monday 14th September 10.00am – 1.00pm. Venue TBC</p> <p>SS asked for suggestions for guest speakers to attend. The new GP contract, and Adult Social Care were agreed. SS to forward JL contact details for Matthew Walmsley local GP.</p> <p>SS suggested Vicki Pattinson, regarding an update on Adult Social Care services. SS to contact.</p> <p>Meeting Value – The meeting ran over leaving insufficient time for discussion.</p>	JL SS SS SS
8	<p><u>Date and Time of Next Meeting</u></p> <p>Monday 18th May 2026, 13.30 - 15.30</p>	