Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee

Thursday 12 March 2026

14:00pm – 16:00pm

Teams meeting

Members:	
Grace Quantock	Chair of the Committee (Deputy Chair of the Board)
Bamidele Adenipekun	Non-Executive member
Rajan Madhok	Non-Executive member (from item 8)
Attendees:	
Alyson Thomas	Chief Executive
Richard Bevan	Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary
Christopher Davies	Director of People and Organisational Development
Charysse Harper	Head of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing
Apologies:	
Medwin Hughes	Committee member (Chair of the Board)
Minutes:	
Karla Lee	Governance and Risk Manager

1.0 Welcome, introductions, declarations of interest and apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked colleagues for the work that had been undertaken in preparing the papers for the meeting.

1.2 It was agreed to record the meeting for the purpose of the minutes only.

1.3 Apologies were received and noted as above. A Non-Executive member was having trouble with logging in and therefore, the meeting was not quorate until item 8. However, no decisions were anticipated to be required before that time, so it was agreed to continue with the meeting and reconfirm any decisions, when the member joined the meeting.

1.4 The Chief Executive and staff colleagues at the meeting declared an interest in item 8, agenda for change annual uplift and the Chief Executive declared a specific interest in the item focusing on the uplift for very senior manager salaries. It was confirmed that the Chief Executive would stay in the meeting during this item.

1.5 No other declarations were received.

2.0 People update report including the quarter 3 dashboard

2.1 The Director of People and Organisational Development presented the workforce update report, and provided a comprehensive overview of recent developments within the workforce function including the following recruitment updates:

- 5 of the 6 new roles have been recruited.
- 2 out of 3 Community Engagement Officer roles had been recruited and the remaining 1 was due to be interviewed imminently.
- An Administrative Support Officer covering complaints advocacy had been successfully trialled in the Gwent region.
- A new Band 3 administrative role was also in development.
- Interviews were held on 03 March 2026 for a Regional Operations Manager in North Wales
- Pre-employment checks were underway for the Corporate Director of People and Resources, and the Head of Communications.
- Learning and development activities had focused on responding to individual requests and most requirements had been met.
- A health and safety review had been undertaken in Cwm Taf region.

2.2 The dashboard was presented and the following key themes were highlighted:

- Workforce stability remained strong with low turnover rates. The contract type and agenda statistics remained largely unchanged from the previous quarter:

- The dashboard showed lower agency worker numbers compared to the last quarter, which was due to recent recruitment activity which had replaced the majority of agency roles.

- A new approach had been trialled for exit interviews, where HR would contact leavers directly rather than managers. The individual who had left in the last quarter declined to participate in an exit interview. The new approach would be monitored over the coming quarter.

- Following the high levels of sickness absence in the last quarter, the people team had scheduled monthly regional meetings (one region on a 6-week cycle) to review absence cases, policy adherence, recording accuracy and appropriate interventions and wellbeing support.

- A shift in managerial approach had been observed, with earlier intervention and proactive use of occupational health support services, stress risk assessments, adjusted duties and phased returns.

- Managers were being supported to ensure correct use of our Electronic Staff Record (ESR) system as issues identified incorrect or inconsistent ESR usage, which included the regular appraisal meetings not being recorded. There were bespoke training sessions offered, where needed.

- Detailed dashboards had been produced for each region to track progress which were used in monthly meetings to review key metrics, identify issues, and plan support.

2.3 The Committee discussed ongoing challenges with ESR compliance, with concerns raised about managers repeatedly needing guidance and the impact this had on data accuracy, particularly for agency staff records and downstream payroll issues.

2.4 It was confirmed that while new e-learning, including anti-racism training, had only recently been introduced, completion rates were already improving through real-time regional monitoring, and updated figures would be provided at the next meeting in the people report.

2.5 The Committee also explored support for staff returning from work-related stress, noting that tailored interventions, occupational health input, and regular reviews were showing positive results.

2.6 Concerns were raised about volunteer disengagement in some regions, with plans for a time-credits reward system and training for managers to strengthen volunteer engagement being outlined. Further discussion highlighted the need to embed line-manager capability through a new development programme and by incorporating core responsibilities into performance objectives.

2.7 Learning from recent recruitment activity was highlighted and that it had been considered to develop fictionalised case studies to illustrate proactive absence management.

3.0 Location strategy update

3.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on the planned relocation of the Pembrokeshire office, where the current standalone premises were underused due to hybrid working and therefore incurred unnecessary rental costs.

3.2 A new shared space option had been agreed with a local third-sector partner, Pembrokeshire Alliance of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO), offering greater visibility, reduced costs and opportunities for closer collaboration with organisations such as Citizens Advice, whose services aligned closely with the client base.

3.3 Staff consultation had been completed, concerns regarding confidentiality had been addressed through access to private rooms, and the integrated impact assessment indicated positive benefits. The move was now progressing through final approval processes, including any required board sign-off and lease-related timelines, with implementation expected imminently.

3.4 The Committee noted that if successful, this model could inform the wider location strategy across Wales, and members shared examples of the social and community benefits of co-located hubs.

4.0 Staff wellbeing survey update

4.1 The committee received an update on the refreshed staff wellbeing survey, which had been redesigned following feedback from the Strategic Delivery Group and a review of progress since the last survey.

4.2 Key changes included clearer definitions of terms such as wellbeing, work-life balance and belonging, stronger guidance on confidentiality, mandatory region reporting to support identifying good practice, and removal of job roles to reduce identifiability concerns.

4.3 The survey would also gather staff views on wellbeing breaks and how they were used, whether the current 15-minute model worked, and whether alternative options such as accumulating time would be preferable, as well as preferred future survey frequency. The survey had been finalised, translated, and was expected to be issued within the next 2 weeks, alongside a write-up from the staff conference.

4.4 It was also noted that, in response to previous survey feedback, the monthly newsletter now regularly celebrated staff achievements, offering greater visibility and recognition.

5.0 Policy review report

5.1 The Director of People and Organisational Development provided an update on 2 policies:

- Dress code policy.
- Maternity, paternity, adoption and surrogacy policy.

5.2 The revised dress code policy, which had completed a full staff and trade union consultation was presented for approval, and the maternity, paternity, adoption and surrogacy policy, which requires minor amendments to ensure compliance with legislative changes under the Employment Rights Act 2025 coming into force on 6 April, including updating the qualification period to a day-one entitlement and removing outdated references.

5.3 These small updates would continue to maintain legal compliance while a broader, more comprehensive review of the maternity offer was planned for the coming year in response to staff feedback and to ensure alignment with standards across comparable public sector organisations.

5.4 The Committee expressed support for the approach and noted the importance of strengthening staff support measures. It was agreed that these policies would be submitted to the Board for approval in March 2026.

A25-03-01: Policies for approval – Submit the dress code policy and Maternity, paternity, adoption and surrogacy policy to the Board for approval in March 2026. **Action**: Director of People and Organisational Development.

6.0 Annual equity monitoring report 2025/2026

6.1 The Head of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing presented the Annual Equity Monitoring Report for 2025/2026 and highlighted a key improvement compared with the previous year on the performance against Objective 4 had progressed from “somewhat

effective" to "effective". This was considered a positive reflection of the work undertaken.

6.2 The report had provided useful perspectives, demonstrating that more progress had been made over the year than might be apparent in day-to-day operations. Confidence was expressed in the organisation's direction and noted the alignment between staff profile data in the report and information to be discussed later in the meeting.

6.3 This year's learning would inform next year's priorities, particularly the redevelopment of the organisation's website which would be expected to significantly improve accessibility and address ongoing issues with the current site, with enhanced accessibility tools planned as part of the redesign.

6.4 The Chair thanked all involved for the work on the report and noted the importance of taking a broader view to recognise progress and the significant effort involved. No further comments or questions were raised, and the committee acknowledged the comprehensive nature of the report.

6.5 It was agreed that the report would be submitted to the Board for approval in March 2026.

A25-03-02: Annual Equity Monitoring Report for 2025/2026 – Submit the report to Board for approval in March 2026. **Action**: Director of People and Organisational Development.

7.0 Output from the committee effectiveness review and development plan

7.1 The Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary presented the outcomes of the committee effectiveness review and development plan.

7.2 It was reported that the review indicated the committee considered that it was developing well and providing value, particularly given its relatively recent establishment in its current form. The review also identified areas for further embedding and improvement, which included:

- Enhanced agenda planning and meeting management, which include timely confirmation of dates and distribution of papers.
- Improve impact tracking, with members expressing a desire for clearer follow-up on decisions made and visibility of resulting outcomes.
- Continue with a routine annual review process, which will now be formalised along with an associated development plan.
- Allocate dedicated time within committee meetings for future workforce-focused discussions, to be built into the forward work plan.

7.3 The Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary proposed to work with the Chief Executive, Director of People and Organisational Development and colleagues to implement the identified improvements.

7.4 These would be incorporated into the committee's forward work plan, and an update report on progress would be brought to the committee at the mid-year point. A further formal annual review would take place towards the end of the calendar year or early next year, in preparation for the 2026-2027 year-end review.

8.0 Agenda for change annual uplift and uplift for very senior manager salaries

8.1 The Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary confirmed for the formal record that the committee had previously provided approval via email for the very senior manager pay uplift.

8.2 He noted that a 3.25% uplift had been applied for executives and employees covered by executive and senior pay terms and conditions and backdated to 1 April 2025. Only 1 member of the organisation fell under the very senior manager pay category. i.e. the Chief Executive.

8.3 Although the uplift would be applied automatically, it is considered good governance for the organisation to note and confirm such uplifts formally. The committee confirmed that the email approval would now be formally noted in the minutes.

8.4 The Director of People and Organisational Development informed the committee that an uplift for agenda for change staff for the 2026/2027 financial year had been confirmed at 3.3%. This uplift would be applied automatically and did not require committee approval but was noted for awareness.

9.0 Electronic Staff Record (ESR) replacement

9.1 The Director of People and Organisational Development provided a high-level update on the national work to replace the Electronic Staff Record system, which was approaching the end of its lifecycle. A new system was in development, and the organisation had been invited, alongside NHS Wales Shared Services, to become an early adopter.

9.2 The anticipated benefits of early adoption were outlined, which included:

- Enhanced migration support from the Future Solutions Team.
- Access to the new system up to 2 years earlier than other organisations.
- A significantly improved, more intuitive user interface, in contrast with the current ESR, which can be difficult for end users to navigate.

9.3 It was noted that the level of resource and support being offered to participants at this stage might be greater than that available later in the rollout, when NHS Shared Services would be supporting multiple organisations simultaneously.

9.4 The Chief Executive added that early adoption would provide a valuable opportunity to reset and strengthen expectations of line managers, supported by training delivered directly by the system developers, and emphasised that operational behavioural change would still be required regardless of system change, but the new system could assist in reinforcing improved practice.

9.5 The Chair reflected that while early adoption carried some risks, it may be preferable to navigate any issues with additional support, particularly given the current system's limitations. It was noted that the new system would likely be promoted positively, and the organisation would base its decision on experience and assurances rather than marketing.

9.6 A non-executive member queried the potential "worst-case scenario" should early adoption encounter significant system issues, and whether this could impact organisational operations. It was confirmed that business continuity would be a critical requirement and indicated that developers appeared committed to ensuring system stability, particularly as the solution was expected to roll out more widely across Wales and England.

9.7 It was agreed that this would be explicitly raised again when the Executive Team meet with the Future Solutions Team.

A25-03-03: Electronic Staff Record - The Executive Team to raise the issue with the developers that business continuity would be critical. **Action**: The Executive Team.

10.0 People and workforce risks

10.1 The Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary presented an overview of people-related risks from the corporate risk register and regional risk profiles.

10.2 The 2 highest-rated risks which were at a score 20 were highlighted:

- **Learning and development capacity** – reflecting the need to strengthen organisational capability and ongoing work to develop next-year's learning and development programme.
- **Organisational staff sickness** – an increasing risk, driven in part by recent absences among senior staff, as referenced earlier in the meeting.

10.3 It was noted that mitigations and development work were in place for both areas, and further detail had been discussed during earlier agenda items. The committee was provided with an update on wider developments in organisational risk management such as:

- A risk workshop which was held on 04 March 2026 received positive feedback.

- Internal Audit had recently completed a review of the organisation's risk management arrangements, providing a reasonable assurance rating for the first year of the strategy's implementation.

- Work was underway to develop the risk dashboards further, which included a specific dashboard for People and Workforce risks, which will be brought to a future meeting for committee input and assurance.

10.4 The Chief Executive added that the executive team reviewed risks regularly and remained concerned about the capacity of the People Team. This was because of the need to provide significant hands-on support to line managers who were still developing essential management competencies. This reduced the team's capacity to progress wider organisational development work.

10.5 As part of annual planning and budget discussions, the executive team had considered temporary additional resourcing to support this developmental agenda.

10.6 A non-executive member sought assurance on measures to support staff wellbeing and address sickness absence. The Chief Executive outlined 3 strands of work:

- Strengthening line manager capability for early identification and proactive support.
- Capturing staff views through the forthcoming wellbeing survey.
- Learning from wider Welsh public service networks, although solutions at national level are still emerging.

10.7 A non-executive member emphasised the importance of drawing on intelligence from across the public sector to inform future thinking. The value of board members' ambassadorial engagement with regions was emphasised and continued relationship-building was encouraged. It was confirmed that the ambassador role was to be reviewed at the Board Development session in April 2026.

10.8 A non-executive member raised a question about the effectiveness of occupational health services, particularly in supporting staff experiencing workplace stress or returning from long-term sickness.

10.9 It was explained that experiences varied between individuals, but the organisation had recently moved to a new provider with stronger neurodiversity expertise and continued to promote early occupational health intervention.

10.10 Although reporting could be delayed, several staff on long-term absence had recently returned or were in the process of returning

and were being supported by closer monthly oversight and phased return planning.

10.11 The committee **noted the report** and the ongoing improvement work.

11.0 To discuss and confirm the minutes from the last meeting

11.1 The draft minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

12.0 Action log update

12.1 The Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary presented the updated action log and reported positive progress with the majority of actions completed following review by the Executive Team.

12.2 A number of updates that were not given in advance were provided:

- The People Strategy had been consulted on with staff; however, its timescales were being reviewed due to current capacity constraints within the People Team. The executive team was considering resourcing requirements as part of next year's budget and planning cycle to ensure delivery is realistic.

- A review discussion was arranged for the April 2026 Board development session on the regional ambassador roles. The Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary confirmed he would work with the Deputy Chair to ensure that comprehensive preparatory material was provided, including a summary of past discussions and current coverage.

- A number of staff had volunteered for British Sign Language training, a provider had been agreed and information had been issued to participants.

12.3 The Head of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing provided an update focusing on disability and ethnicity data in recruitment following concerns raised at the previous meeting:

- **Disability -** Although the organisation operated a Guaranteed Interview Scheme, candidates must meet essential criteria. Data suggested possible barriers within job descriptions and person specifications, which were shaped by external system constraints.
    - Therefore, Inclusive assessment options, including alternative interview methods and clearer criteria wording and removing unnecessary complexity would be explored which aligned with ongoing work under the Disabled People's Rights Plan.
- **Ethnicity -** The majority of applicants identified as White British, with smaller applicant numbers from Asian and Black African backgrounds. This pattern reflected the reach of NHS recruitment platforms, currently the primary advertising channel.
    - Broadening marketing routes was expected to improve diversity; recent recruitments had already used wider platforms.
    - Additional issues influenced shortlisting patterns which included increased AI generated applications that did not meet criteria, applications likely made for welfare related compliance, where candidates might not meet minimum requirements and applicants requiring immigration sponsorship, which the organisation could not currently provide. Clearer communication was planned to reduce mismatched applications.

12.4 The 2 remaining actions updates were provided:

- The Chief Executive provided a brief verbal update and apologised that she had not yet met with the Aspiring Board Member to gather the agreed insights relating to equity, diversity and inclusion and therefore, requested that the update be

rescheduled to the May committee meeting. The committee agreed.

- The Chief Executive reported that the matter of member development programme and mentoring opportunities had been raised with Welsh Government. The Partnership Team did not have detailed information on current development or mentoring opportunities for new board members and had therefore referred the matter to the Public Appointments Unit.

- The Chief Executive highlighted the Committee's discussion from the previous meeting about opportunities to retain valuable experience from departing board members through mentoring or buddying arrangements. This suggestion had been shared with Welsh Government, and a further update would be expected by the May 2026 committee meeting.

13.0 Committee forward plan and schedule of business 2026/2027

13.1 The forward plan was presented and noted. It was acknowledged that the plan would continue to evolve in line with the outcomes of the committee effectiveness review. The plan currently set out meeting dates and identified areas of business, and additional dates would be added once confirmed.

13.2 Further refinement would be undertaken with colleagues to ensure all relevant items were appropriately scheduled. The committee noted that the plan was intended as a flexible framework, to be updated regularly to reflect emerging priorities and committee feedback.

13.3 A non-executive member raised whether volunteer-related matters should be incorporated into the forward plan and highlighted potential areas for improvement. It was agreed that the Corporate Director of Governance and Board Secretary would ensure it was included on a future agenda with sufficient time allocated.

14.0 Any other business

14.1 It was noted that a paper for information was presented to the committee relating to the Gender Pay Gap report prior to submission to the Board on 25 March 2026.

14.2 There was no other business to discuss.

15.0 To confirm the date of the next meeting

15.1 The next meeting was scheduled for the 29 May 2026.

15.2 The meeting closed at 15:46pm.