Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

OPEN MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS
11th September 2025, 4.00 – 6.00 pm

PRESENT:	Sue Bell	Public Governor, Runnymede, Surrey Heath, Windsor and Maidenhead	**SB**
	Tracey Bradshaw	Staff Governor, Nursing and Midwifery	**TB**
	Andy Brown	Staff Governor, Volunteers	**AB**
	Med Buck	Appointed Governor, Spelthorne Borough Council	**MB**
	Kate Colban	Staff Governor, Allied Health Professionals	**KC**
	Heather Hall	Public Governor, Runnymede, Surrey Heath, Windsor and Maidenhead	**HH**
	Shirley Holmes	Public Governor, Woking and Guildford	**SH**
	Karen Howkins	Public Governor, Spelthorne	**KH**
	Toc Husain	Staff Governor, Medical and Dental	**TH**
	Chad Lake	Public Governor, Spelthorne	**CL**
	John Machin	Acting Chair	**JM**
	Ellen Nicholson	Appointed Governor, Woking Borough Council	**EN**
	Alex Palombi	Appointed Governor, The Royal Holloway, University of London	**AP**
	Michael Smith	Lead Governor/Public Governor, Woking and Guildford	**MS**
	Anthony Tweh	Public Governor, Hounslow, Kingston-upon-Thames, Richmond-upon-Thames and Rest of England	**AT**
	Denis Wright	Public Governor, Runnymede, Surrey Heath, Windsor and Maidenhead	**DW**
APOLOGIES:	Edwin Addis	Public Governor, Hounslow, Kingston-upon-Thames, Richmond-upon-Thames and Rest of England	**EA**
	Miranda Alcock	Public Governor, Woking and Guildford	**MA**
	Aimee Aubeeluck	Appointed Governor, University of Surrey	**AA**
	Richard Evans	Public Governor, Spelthorne	**RE**
	Ann Ooms	Public, Governor, Elmbridge	**AO**
	Trevor Sherwood	Public Governor, Elmbridge	**TS**
	Mark Williams	Appointed Governor, Runnymede Borough Council	**MW**
	Gavin Wood	Staff Governor, Ancillary, Admin, Clerical and Managerial	**GW**
IN ATTENDANCE			
	Jason Bincalar	Chief Digital Information Officer (CDIO)	**JB**
	Jane Dale	Senior Independent Director (SID)	**JD**
	Simon Devonshire	Non-Executive Director	**SD**
	Jane Dickson	Non-Executive Director	**JDi**
	Becky Fairbairn	Director of Communications, Engagement and Experience	**BF**
	Jo Fanning	Chief People Officer (CPO)	**JF**
	Hannah Hamilton	Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	**HHm**
	Chris Kane	Non-Executive Director	**CK**
	Sal Maughan	Associate Director of Corporate Affairs and Governance	**SMa**
	Julie Pearce	Non-Executive Director	**JP**
	James Thomas	Chief Operating Officer (COO)	**JT**

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SECRETARY: Anu Sehdev Membership and Engagement Manager **AS**

Minute		**Action**
COG-34/25	**Apologies and Welcome** Apologies as listed on the previous page. The Chair welcomed the Chief Financial Officer to their first Council of Governors meeting as well as returning Med Buck who had replaced Sue Doran as Appointed Governor representing Spelthorne Borough Council. The following Governors would be leaving the Council at the end of their terms on 30th November 2025 and were thanked for their service: • Tracey Bradshaw, Staff Governor for Nursing and Midwifery • Trevor Sherwood, Public Governor for Elmbridge • Richard Evans, Public Governor for Spelthorne • Karen Howkins, Public Governor for Spelthorne • Miranda Alcock, Public Governor for Woking and Guildford	
COG-35/25	**Declarations of Interests in the Proceedings** None	
COG-36/25	**Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd July 2025** The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 2025 were agreed as a correct record.	
COG-37/25	**Matters Arising** The updated action log was noted. In addition, the Associate Director of Corporate Affairs and Governance referred to the feedback she had received on Council of Governors – Effectiveness Survey Evaluation and advised that much of the actions had been completed and that she was in the process of working through the remaining ones and would provide an update at the next meeting.	**SM**
	FEEDBACK FROM GOVERNORS	
COG-38/25	**Governor Activities** The Lead Governor shared the full list of activities undertaken by the Governors during the period after the last Council of Governors meeting. The Governors had been very active with many informal meetings taking place and the Lead Governor highlighted his meeting with the Lead Governor at the Royal Surrey. He thanked Governors for their participation and congratulated the Trust on putting on a great Community Day. The Council NOTED the report.	

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Minute **Action**

COG-39/25 **Patient Experience Group Report**

The Lead Governor highlighted the presentation by the Patient Safety Partners who brought with them a lot of experience in the NHS as well as from industry. There was agreement that the Patient Safety Partners added a great deal and finding ways to get information from them early in order to improve the patient experience was key.

The Council NOTED the report.

COG-40/25 **Group Chief Executive's Report**

In the Group Chief Executive's absence, the COO presented highlights from the report.

Referencing the NHS Oversight Framework league tables, and Ashford and St Peter's being ranked 52nd out of 134 acute trusts, it was considered important to benchmark but if a comparison were undertaken in similar trusts, there was no doubt the Trust would come out slightly better. The COO encouraged Governors to compare the Trust against other medium sized acute trusts to gain a better reflection on how the Trust was performing. It was considered the Trust did not publicise the excellent work it was doing. Since patients were able to choose where they received treatment, it was suggested further narrative around how well the Trust was delivering on patient care should be included. The excellent work in NICU also needed to be shared with the public.

Simon Devonshire, Non-Executive Director, reassured Governors that performance was scrutinised at Board but the league tables placed a significant amount of focus on the deficit and not necessarily patient experience, as would be expected. The COO advised that the Board recognised the Trust was doing well and where improvements could be made. Julie Pearce, Non-Executive Director, advised that the league tables were refreshed every three months. Julie Dickson, Non-Executive Director, did not feel the league tables helped patients make informed choices due to difficulty of getting the relevant information needed.

In response to the query around Ashford theatres the CFO advised that, as long as the final checks were positive, they were expected to up and running by 19th September.

The Council NOTED the report.

INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT

COG-41/25 **Financial Update**

Chris Kane, Non-Executive Director, introduced the agenda item by advising that the paper provided an update on month 4 and included information on the land sale proceeds from 2019 and how those funds have been utilised, as well as progress with Abbey Wing/Maternity estates improvement works.

Chris was pleased to advise that the Trust was on plan to break even, although meeting the cost improvement plan (CIP) continued to be a challenge. Some good controls had been put in place in terms of pay, but industrial action had incurred additional costs.

In relation to the CIP, the potential affect to patient safety was queried. The CFO advised that there were stringent controls in place to avoid any impact on patient safety and weekly meetings took place to discuss potential issues. The CPO added that safe

Minute **Action**

staffing was adhered to at all times. On the day sickness was escalated and managed by moving staff around where possible or securing cover through the bank. In addition, regular staff huddles took place to discuss pinch points and staff were asked to ensure annual leave was planned. Jane Dickson, Non-Executive Director, advised that ensuring finance did not impact quality was paramount and this was being kept a close eye on through the detail in the staff survey as well as conversations with staff.

The Lead Governor referred to the previous land sale and the intention at the time to invest monies into Emergency Services. The COO advised that a proportion of the monies went towards the elective centre and the CFO added that the rest had gone towards the multi-storey car park, extension to the Education Centre, building the Wellbeing Centre and additional theatres at Ashford Hospital. It was confirmed that all the land sale monies had been spent.

Improving the scrutiny of contracts was raised and it was queried what improvements had been made to avoid future delays. The CFO advised that an external review of the work carried out at Ashford Hospital was underway. Work on the Emergency Department and Paediatrics was about to start and learning would be taken forward in this endeavour. The Non-Executive Directors advised that they would support the Governors in seeking assurance in this regard.

The decrease in the bank rate and ensuring safer staffing in specialist areas, such as the ITU, was highlighted. The CPO advised that there had not been a significant drop in bank cover and specialist areas were being monitored. Therapy areas had been flagged as an issue and these areas would continue to be monitored. Further details would be picked up after the meeting. **TB/JF**

The CPO stressed it was important not to be over reliant on bank staff but appreciated that there was a need for agency staff when positions were not easy to recruit to or cover during absences, especially during the school holidays.

The Council NOTED the report.

COG-42/25 **People – Fit and Proper Persons Declaration 2025**

The Associate Director of Corporate Affairs and Governance advised that the purpose of this report was to provide assurance that Directors were Fit and Proper Persons Test (FPPT) assessed to be able to carry out their responsibilities. All new Board appointments would go through this process. This information would then be shared with NHS England.

The Council NOTED the FPPT declaration.

COG-43/25 **Millenium Electronic Patient Record Update**

The CDIO advised the paper covered responses to Governors' questions and welcomed further comments.

The issue of late letters came up and staff not knowing that they had approve them before they were sent out. The CDIO advised that it was important that staff followed processes. Letters were not created on Millenium but on Dictate IT which transcribed letters for the administrative team to check. A lot of work to support clinical teams had been undertaken to use ambient voice which was transcribed automatically.

Minute **Action**

Jane Dickson, Non-Executive Director, advised there was a huge amount of technology being utilised and wanted to understand what the user experience was at the Trust. The COO advised there had been a clinical office redesign undertaken to support staff with using technology more efficiently. In response to concerns about whether letters had been sent out, the COO assured that all teams were fully aware of their responsibilities and were working extra hours to clear the backlog. The CDIO further explained that the postal service could sometimes be unreliable and in order to provide a smoother experience, patients were encouraged to use the dedicated app, which offered seamless and immediate access to information and updates. Discussion around moving away from Dictate IT and using improved technology took place.

Assurance was sought on whether processes that were not working had been identified and what was being done to fix problems and how often issues were being tracked. The COO advised that this should be happening all the time; at the very least weekly.

Delays of up to four months in receiving important letters have become a significant issue. These delays often resulted in GPs not prescribing the necessary medications on time. GPs believe it was the patient's responsibility to follow up on these missing letters. To address these concerns, it was agreed that the issue would be discussed in more detail after the meeting. **SH/JB**

Delays in accessing replacement laptops were raised and the CDIO advised the Trust had more devices than staff but the service could be improved where delays were being experienced. It was agreed to discuss further after the meeting. **KF/JB**

Accessibility of patient records when being treated at another hospital was queried and it was advised that a summary of care could be shared across Surrey and work was ongoing to enable access to the full patient record.

The self-service kiosks were highlighted where issues ranged from not informing patients where to go and devices not working. The CDIO advised that kiosks were purchased and deployed but agreed they needed to be co-created with the clinical service they were deployed to.

Staff reported difficulties in making changes to the Millennium system, raising questions about how confident the IT team was in the system’s responsiveness and intelligence. The CDIO agreed making a change to the system was a long process. The Trust had invested in the product and it had since been taken over by Oracle. The surgical forms were in the process of being streamlined.

It was considered that around 87% of the public had access to technology, making physical letters less essential for everyday communication. As a result, improving digital communication services was key in ensuring that most people could easily receive and respond to important information online; whilst maintaining support for those who preferred or required traditional mail.

The Council NOTED the report and also reflected that regular updates would be welcomed.

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Minute **Action**

STATUTORY

COG-44/25 **Update on External Governance and Financial Governance Reviews**

The Associate Director of Corporate Affairs and Governance advised that this report had previously been submitted to Trust Board and would be further scrutinised by the Audit and Risk committee at its next meeting taking place on 12th September. A list of 23 actions would be discussed.

COG-45/25 **Council of Governors – Election Update**

The Membership and Engagement Manager was pleased to advise that as of 14:00 hours on the last day for nominations the Trust had received 33 nominations for 13 Governor positions and that all elections would be contested and vacancies filled.

COG-46/25 **Membership of the Council of Governors**

The Membership and Engagement Manager advised that the report reflected one change being that Councillor Med Buck replaced Councillor Sue Doran as Appointed Governor representing Spelthorne Borough Council.

COG-47/25 **Council of Governors – Standing Orders**

The Associate Director of Corporate Affairs and Governance advised that the amended standing orders presented were in response to the recommendations made in the 2025 External Governance Review Report (Audit One) and subsequent amendments to the Health and Social Care Act 2022 and included:

- Clarity around tenure of the Lead Governor; and
- Provision for dealing with urgent matters.

It was anticipated the second item would rarely be needed. The need for urgent decisions could be mitigated by planning ahead as had been done with the proposed new Remuneration and Nominations Committee where meeting dates had been scheduled for 2026.

The Lead Governor requested the wording relating to urgent matters was amended slightly from “not practical” to “not possible”. It was also considered that short notice virtual meetings could also be explored as a way forward. **AS**

COG-48/25 **Council of Governors Work Plan**

The Associate Director of Corporate Affairs and Governance advised that the work plan had been updated to include the following:

- Fit and Proper Person Test (FPPT)
- Trust Annual Plan
- Chair’s report on Audit and Risk
- Quality Account

The Council APPROVED the work plan.

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Minute		Action
COG-49/25	Any Other Business None	
COG-50/25	**Date of Next Meeting** Wednesday 17th December 2025, 4.00 – 6.00 pm	

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Action Log

Meeting Date	Minute Ref	Topic	Action	Lead	Due Date	Update	Status
2.7.25	**COG-19/25**	**Matters Arising**	Share the Estates Strategy once it is finalised.	**HH**	17.12.25	Work ongoing.	
11.9.25	**COG-37/25**	**Matters Arising**	Provide an update on the actions resulting from the Council of Governors Evaluation Survey.	**SM**	17.12.25	On agenda for 17.12.25	✔
11.9.25	**COG-41/25**	**Financial Update**	Further details to be shared and discussed.	**TB/JF**	ASAP	TB agreed to liaise with JF.	✔
11.9.25	**COG-42/25**	**Millenium Electronic Patient Record Update**	Share further detail on delayed letters.	**SH/JB**	ASAP	Complete	✔
11.9.25	**COG-42/25**	**Millenium Electronic Patient Record Update**	Share further detail around delays in acquiring laptops.	**KC/JB**	ASAP		
11.9.25	**COG-47/25**	**Council of Governors – Standing Orders**	Amend wording	**AS**	ASAP	Complete and published on the Trust's website.	✔

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