

Public Council of Governors' Meeting

26 February 2026 at 1pm in the Matter Room, The Studio Leeds, Riverside West, Whitehall Road, Leeds, LS1 4AW

PRESENT:

Merran McRae – Chair of the Trust (Chair of the meeting)

Public Governors

Miranda Arie
Nicola Lister

Service User Governors

Sharon Rai
Victoria Thomson

Carer Governors

Peter Ongley

Executive Directors

Dr Sara Munro

Staff Governors

Amy Pratt
Adam Redhead

Appointed Governors

Cllr Ian Cuthbertson
Cllr Emma Flint
Gabriella Obeng Nyarko

Non-Executive Directors

Zoe Burns-Shore
Prof Frances Healey
Martin Wright
Katy Wilburn

IN ATTENDANCE:

Kieran Betts, Corporate Governance Officer

Rose Cooper, Deputy Head of Corporate Governance

Clare Edwards, Associate Director for Corporate Governance

Sharon Prince, Consultant Clinical and Forensic Psychologist / Senior Responsible Officer, Synergi Leeds Partnership

Action

26/001 Welcome and introductions (agenda item 1)

Merran McRae opened the meeting at 1pm and welcomed everyone.

26/002 Apologies for absence (agenda item 2)

Apologies were noted from the following governors: Comfort Akinbobola (Public Governor); Nicola Binns (Clinical Staff Governor); Matthew Knight (Public Governor); Richard Malkin (Public Governor); Matthew McGonagle (Public Governor); Carole Myers (Service User Governor); Dr Ivan Nip (Public Governor); and Becky Oxley (Service User Governor).

Apologies from Non-executive Directors had been received from Cleveland Henry and Kaneez Khan.

The meeting was quorate.

26/003 Changes to any declarations of interest and declaration of any conflicts of interest in respect of agenda items (agenda item 3)

No governor advised of any change to their declaration of interests or declared any conflict of interest in respect of agenda items.

26/004 Sharing Stories: Synergi-Leeds (agenda item 4)

The Council received a presentation on Synergi-Leeds from Sharon Prince. Firstly, Sharon discussed the current racial inequalities in mental health and explained the Synergi-Leeds partnership theory of change to improve mental health outcomes for ethnically diverse communities and to narrow racial inequalities in mental health. She then outlined the approach, key networks and current workstreams of Synergi-Leeds and details of their grants programme which funded community organisations to support the mental health of people from ethnically diverse communities. The Council also heard about the use of creative spaces to enable service users to constructively challenge and share their experiences.

Sharon Rai asked for more information on the initiatives to reduce stigmatisation and racial inequity in and out of mental health services. Sharon Prince outlined various initiatives including the system-wide anti-stigma campaign and the racial equity community of practice at the Trust which focused on addressing structural racism in services; however, she emphasised that reducing stigma was the responsibility of everyone and that more needed to be done in an effective and impactful way. Sharon

Rai also highlighted the inequalities in terms of access to psychological therapies and Sharon Prince talked about the demand for culturally diverse therapists and the potential opportunities to work with the third sector to improve the availability of diverse therapists. Sharon Rai then asked what challenges could affect the advancement of grassroots and community-led initiatives. Sharon Prince discussed issues relating to funding and short-term contracts, noting that the third sector was often disproportionately affected by cost savings.

Amy Pratt asked how governors could hold non-executive directors to account to ensure they are scrutinising issues through a racialised lens. Katy Wilburn referred to work that the Mental Health Legislation Committee had commissioned into disproportionate detentions which had generated useful recommendations and learning. Sharon Prince highlighted the importance of having diversity in leadership, appropriate care pathways and community interventions as well as strong relationships between providers. She also emphasised the importance of taking action as well as collecting and reviewing data.

Miranda Arieah asked how governors and those with lived experience could create transformation and redesign services. Sharon Prince discussed the importance of having the psychological safety to ask questions, being able to evidence that something could be provided more effectively in a different way and realigning funds and resources accordingly. She also talked about working flexibly and building collaboration and trust.

The Council thanked Sharon Prince for the informative presentation.

The Council **received** the presentation on Synergi-Leeds and **thanked** Sharon Prince for the information provided.

Sharon Prince left the meeting.

26/005 Minutes of the public Council of Governors' meeting held on the 22 July 2025 (agenda item 5.1)

The minutes of the public Council of Governors' meeting held on the 22 July 2025 were **approved** as a true record.

26/006 Minutes of the Annual Members' Meeting held on the 29 July 2025 – for information (agenda item 5.2)

The minutes of the Annual Members' Meeting held on the 29 July 2025 were **received** for information.

26/007 Matters arising (agenda item 6)

The Council **agreed** that there were no matters arising that were not either on the agenda or on the action log.

26/008 Questions from members of the public for the Council of Governors (agenda item 6.1)

The Council did not receive any questions from members of the public.

26/009 Cumulative Action Log – actions outstanding from previous public meetings (agenda item 7)

The Council **received** the cumulative action log, **noted** the updates provided, and **agreed** the actions reported as complete.

26/010 Report from the Chair of the Trust (agenda item 8)

Merran McRae presented her report and summarised the key points. Merran noted that since the last Council of Governors' meeting in November 2025, Gail Harrison, Cllr Fiona Venner and Anne Toone had left the Council. She also noted that it was Nicola Binns' last meeting as a clinical staff governor. She noted her thanks on behalf of the Council for the hard work and dedication that Gail, Fiona, Anne and Nicola had given to the role of governor. Merran then welcomed Cllr Emma Flint, the new appointed governor representing Leeds City Council. She also noted that Dominique Burley had joined the Council as an appointed governor representing Volition Leeds, specifically learning disabilities, and her first formal meeting would be on the 7 July 2026.

Merran then congratulated Amy Pratt on being elected as the Lead Governor on the 12 January 2026. She informed the Council that Amy had joined the Appointments and Remuneration Committee (ARC) which meant that there was now one vacant seat on this Committee should any governor wish to join. She asked any interested governors to contact the Corporate Governance Team for more information.

The Council **received** the report and **noted** the information provided.

26/011 Report from the Chief Executive (agenda item 9)

Dr Sara Munro introduced her Chief Executive's Report which included updates from across the Trust and local partnership. Sara summarised the updates on the Leeds Poverty Truth Commission; staff engagement, medium-term planning and the alignment with Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust (LCH). Sara also referenced the upcoming Care Quality Commission (CQC) well-led inspection and the recent unannounced inspections of two core services and shared positive news that Mill Lodge and Red Kite View had recently been rated as 'good' following their inspection in October 2025.

Gabriella Obeng Nyarko noted that the "Claims and Complaints Management" internal audit report had received an opinion of low assurance and asked how this would be addressed. Sara responded that the Quality Committee was overseeing the improvements around this.

Gabriella also referenced some issues regarding the timeliness of invoices being paid to third sector organisations. Sara responded that the Trust's performance regarding the payment of invoices was monitored against the national standard and performance had improved with payments to small and medium sized entities being prioritised.

The Council **received** the report from the Chief Executive and **noted** the updates provided.

26/012 Finance Update (agenda item 10)

The Council received the report from Katy Wilburn, Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee, who provided an overview of the Trust's financial position at month 10. She highlighted the updates on capital expenditure and the ongoing work to understand and reduce Bank usage across the Trust.

Peter Ongley noted the areas of overspend in the Capital Plan for 2025/26 and asked if this was scrutinised at committee level. Katy confirmed that the Finance and Performance Committee would query areas of overspend and review trends in spending over time. However, Martin Wright reassured the Council that the overspends that Peter referred to were within the materiality level set by the external auditors. He then explained that the Trust was moving away from reporting against budget towards reporting against run rate as this was considered more informative for financial planning and this was a current focus of the Committee.

Cllr Ian Cuthbertson then asked how the Trust anticipated future risk with regard to expenditure and Martin explained that all strategic risks, including those relating to financial sustainability, were managed through the Board Assurance Framework and examined in detail at committee level on behalf of the Board.

Nicola Lister asked if the Finance and Performance Committee scrutinised the Trust's capital expenditure, noting the restrictions in place around capital funding. Katy and Martin confirmed that the Committee regularly monitored capital expenditure and went on to explain how spend was managed on an annual basis within the capital envelope and between partners across the West Yorkshire system.

The Council **received** the update on the Trust's financial position for information.

26/013 Report from the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee: 27 January 2026 (agenda item 11.1)

Katy Wilburn introduced the report from the recent Finance and Performance Committee meeting and summarised the key points. The Council had no questions or queries on the information provided.

The Council **received** the report from the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee.

26/014 Report from the Chair of the Audit Committee: 20 January 2026 (agenda item 11.2)

Martin Wright introduced the report from the recent Audit Committee meeting and summarised the key points. He referred to the internal audits that had been reviewed at the January meeting and outlined the findings of each audit.

The Council noted that the "Claims and Complaints Management" internal audit had received an opinion of low assurance and asked for more information on this and assurance on how this would be addressed. The Council received more detail on the remit of the internal audit which focused on the processes and timescales for managing and responding to complaints with recommended actions having been agreed to make improvements where needed. The Council noted that the findings of the audit had been referred to the Quality Committee who had responsibility for overseeing the quality aspect of claims and complaints and monitoring performance and trends over time. The Council noted that the recommended actions were due to be completed in the coming months. It was agreed that further information and assurance on the Trust's claims and complaints process would be scheduled for a future meeting.

NS

The Council also asked whether the CQC examined the Trust's performance with regard to internal audits, particularly those relating to quality, and Martin confirmed that this was an area scrutinised by the CQC as part of their well-led inspection framework.

The Council **received** the report from the Chair of the Audit Committee.

26/015 Reports from the Chair of the Quality Committee: 11 December 2025 and 15 January 2026 (agenda item 11.3)

Prof Frances Healey introduced the reports from recent Quality Committee meetings and summarised the key points. She provided more detail on the plans to streamline the 2025/26 Quality Account so that it focused on the statutory content in order to avoid duplication with the Trust's Annual Report and to reduce the workload for the staff who produce it. She then referred to the question asked earlier in the meeting about how to hold non-executive directors to account in relation to racial and other inequalities. She explained what process the Quality Committee had in place to receive assurance on how different service lines were improving equity with regard to the specific care they provide.

Miranda highlighted the importance of having lived experience of mental health services on the Trust's Board of Directors. Merran and Sara responded that having lived experience was a desirable but not essential criteria and there was no requirement for Board members to declare this information. They explained the essential technical skills and experience required for the role, for example financial, clinical or workforce related. They went on to explain that one of the main duties of the Board was to ensure that the Trust had adequate and effective governance systems in place and emphasised that the Board was not responsible for making clinical or operational decisions.

The Council then discussed the importance of people with lived experience being involved in designing and evaluating services and Merran reassured the Council that there were various mechanisms in place to do this. Sara explained that it was part of the Board's responsibility to seek assurance on this matter and noted that the 'sharing stories' session which took place at each Board meeting was an opportunity to hear about patient involvement directly from the services. The Council noted the information provided.

Miranda also asked for more information on the ethnic diversity of the Trust's Board members and Sara confirmed that the gender and ethnicity of the Board was recorded publicly. The Council noted that the Trust measured its progress against the Workforce Race Equality Standard which aimed to improve workplace experiences for ethnic minority staff and ensure that recruitment practices were fair and equitable.

Victoria Thomson then asked if the Quality Committee could be assured that the feedback gathered from service users reflected people's true experiences and queried if there should be a means of collecting feedback independently. Frances explained the various ways in which feedback was gathered routinely and outlined what information and assurance was provided to the Quality Committee in terms of outcome data and self-reported clinical scales. She went on to explain that more in depth feedback would be collected on a wider scale when looking to change or expand a service.

The Council **received** the reports from the Chair of the Quality Committee.

26/016 Report from the Chair of the Workforce Committee: 4 December 2025 (agenda item 11.4)

Zoe Burns-Shore introduced the report from the recent Workforce Committee meeting and summarised the key points.

The Council noted that the Workforce Committee had received an update on the Leeds Recovery College wellbeing programme for staff and received confirmation that wellbeing outcomes for service users would be scrutinised by the Quality Committee. The Council also received assurance on the support in place for volunteers following an incident, noting that they would have access to the same support as substantive staff and received confirmation that this data was monitored by the Workforce Committee.

The Council then had a discussion on the Trust's Bank workforce and the flexible working arrangements available to this group of staff. Katy explained that the Finance and Performance Committee received regular updates on how Bank staff were used, noting that they often had a preference to work unsociable shifts, and received assurance on the work to reduce the numbers of agency staff in the organisation and therefore improve continuity of care.

A member of the Council noted that on occasion there could be a disparity between the care received from temporary workforce such as Bank and agency staff, compared to substantive staff and highlighted the importance of temporary staff being aware of patient triggers. Merran acknowledged that maintaining quality of care was an important and challenging issue. She noted that this had been raised at a recent Board meeting, and actions had been agreed for executive directors to look into the issues in more detail. She suggested that an update on this could be provided at the next Council meeting. The Council also heard about the Culture of Care Programme which had been rolled out across some inpatient services to improve the safety and culture of wards.

NS

The Council **received** the report from the Chair of the Workforce Committee.

26/017 Combined Quality, Workforce and Service Performance Report (agenda item 11.5)

The Committee received the Combined Quality, Workforce and Service Performance Report and noted compliance against the Trust's high-level metrics and mandated standards up to the end of December 2025. The Council did not have any specific questions or queries on the report.

The Council **noted** the information provided.

26/018 Update on request to consider care experienced as a protected characteristic (agenda item 12)

Zoe Burns-Shore thanked the Council for raising this issue and summarised the actions being taken by the organisation to support care leavers into employment at the Trust, including the introduction of guaranteed interviews for care leavers who meet the minimum criteria for the role. The Council noted that some care leavers may require additional support and mentoring, which may require bespoke training for staff, and Zoe confirmed that this was an area that had been considered by the Workforce Committee.

Cllr Emma Flint then informed governors about The Care Leavers Council in Leeds and suggested that they might have valuable experiences to share. It was agreed that The Care Leavers Council would be invited to take part in a 'sharing stories' session at a future Council of Governors' meeting.

CGT

The Council noted the progress made with support for care leavers and highlighted the efforts of Cllr Fiona Venner in championing this work. Amy suggested that a record was kept of instances when the Council had provided constructive challenge and achieved a positive outcome. It was agreed that the Corporate Governance Team would consider how best to approach this.

CGT

The Council **received** the update and **noted** that the inclusion of care leaver candidates within the Guaranteed Interview Scheme was **approved** by the Workforce Committee in December 2025.

26/019 Annual Strategic Risk Analysis (agenda item 13)

Clare Edwards introduced the paper which advised the Council of the key strategic risks as reported through the Board Assurance Framework (BAF). She explained that the BAF was a document received by the Board and its committees so they could be assured that these risks were being effectively controlled. She went on to outline the governance process in place to effectively control and mitigate the risks and noted that the BAF was due to be reviewed in April 2026 for the new financial year. The Council received confirmation that the Trust had separate processes, policies and procedures for managing clinical and operational risks which sat beneath the BAF.

The Council was **assured** that the Board of Directors had agreed the strategic risks and that those risks were monitored by the Board and its committees to ensure they were being effectively controlled and mitigated.

26/020 Support for the Appointment of the Senior Independent Director (agenda item 14)

The Council was reminded that it was the role of the Board of Directors to appoint one of the independent non-executive directors (NEDs) to be the Senior Independent Director (SID). The Council noted that the SID was one route open to governors to raise concerns should they need to.

Merran informed the Council that at its meeting on the 29 January 2026, the Board of Directors had agreed that Zoe Burns-Shore would step into the role of SID with effect from 1 April 2026 for a period of two years. The Council supported this appointment.

The Council **supported** the appointment of Zoe Burns-Shore as the Senior Independent Director with effect from 1 April 2026 for a period of two years.

The Chair of the meeting closed the public meeting of the Council of Governors of Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust at 3:37pm. She thanked governors and members of the public for their attendance.