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HIGHLAND NHS BOARD		**Highland na Gàidhealtachd**
MINUTE of MEETING of the STAFF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE	**4th March 2025 at 10.00 am**	

Present:

Ann Clark, Chair
Fiona Davies, Chief Executive
Kate Dumigan, Staffside Representative
Claire Laurie, Staffside Representative
Dawn MacDonald, Staffside Representative
Philip MacRae, Vice Chair
Steve Walsh, Non-Executive
Janice Preston, Non-Executive

In Attendance:

Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture
Evan Beswick, Chief Officer, Argyll and Bute Health and Social Care Partnership
Gaye Boyd, Deputy Director of People
Louise Bussell, Director of Nursing
Ruth Daly, Board Secretary
Ruth Fry, Head of Comms and Engagement
Richard MacDonald, Director of Estates, Facilities and Capital Planning
Ruth MacDonald, Head of Service – Adult Social Care
David Park, Deputy Chief Executive
Liz Porter, Assistant Director of Financial Services
Pamela Stott, Chief Officer, Highland Health & Social Care Partnership
Karen Doonan, Committee Administrator (minutes)

1   WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that Philip Macrae would be recommended as the new Chair for Staff Governance Committee from May 2025.

Apologies were received from Committee Members Albert Donald and Alison Fraser.

1.2   Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2   ASSURANCE REPORTS & COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATION

2.1   MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14 January 2025

The minutes were **approved** and **agreed** as an accurate record.

2.2 ACTION PLAN

> The Committee
> - **Noted** the latest version of the committee Action Plan and
> - **Agreed** to the proposed closure/amendments of noted actions**.**

2.3 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2024-2025

The Committee **noted** the Workplan as circulated.

COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2025-2026

2.4

The Committee **approved** the Workplan for 2025-2026.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Staff Governance Monitoring Report
Verbal Update from Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture confirmed that regular meetings continued to take place with staffside and a round table discussion was held in February to address areas where improvements were needed, particularly focusing on partnership working. He noted that whilst other issues were raised, a summary from the meeting had been circulated to staff, and actions associated with those issues have been taken.

It was noted that ongoing discussions were taking place to enhance collaboration between staffside and management but no specific assurance could be offered to committee at this time.

> The Committee **noted** the update

3.2 Staff Governance Committee Terms of Reference
Update from Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture confirmed the Board Chair was the only 'Ex Officio' member of the committee and all other memberships were confirmed in the terms of reference.

> The Committee **noted** the update

3.3 Appraisal and PDP Improvement Plan
Update from Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture spoke to the paper wherein it was highlighted:

- A plan had been drawn up looking at a phased approach to the appraisals and PDPs starting with Directors and their direct reports, however the data had shown that this has had little effect on increasing completion rates.
- There was further work to do to understand how to engage managers and staff in the process more fully and to understand the barriers to completion.
- Having time to complete an appraisal was challenging for those who were on the front line.
- It had been identified that the management structure was a challenge to completing appraisals with many managers having upwards of more than 10 direct reports.
- There appeared to be a culture wherein many staff did not see the value in completing an appraisal after not having an appraisal for some time.

The Director of People and Culture explained that further work required to be done to encourage both staff and managers to see the value of appraisals and build on this work.

D Macdonald highlighted Protected Learning Time (PLT) and suggested that once this was built in it may encourage more staff to engage with the appraisal process which she saw as a grass-roots led process. She went on to highlight the challenges for many staff who did not have easy access to laptops citing that password issues due to the length of time it often took for staff to gain access to a laptop.

P Macrae queried the ratio of staff to managers citing that if the data was accurate the ratio was of staff to managers was too high to be manageable. J Preston queried the data in respect of one-to-one meetings with managers suggesting that if the ratio was correct this would also present challenges as staff would not be able to talk things through with their managers.

S Walsh suggested that the PDP process could be streamlined to make it as straightforward as possible as this may encourage more completion of the appraisals and the PDP itself. It was noted that if managers gave more insight into what the organisation could offer staff this also would encourage completion.

The Director of People and Culture agreed that the process was not working effectively in the current approach and agreed that simplifying the process would be helpful. He went on to explain that one size did not fit all in relation to staff, some staff were perfectly happy completing their work and had no other aspirations whilst other staff were eager to learn more. It was important that managers were aware and could adapt their conversations accordingly and that managers were supported in all aspects of the process. It was noted that other Boards were also struggling with completion rates which remained low across all Boards.

It was noted that there was a national PLT group with a local group that fed into this group. Implementation of PLT for staff groups that did not have this built in would be required going forward. The Director of People and Culture confirmed that a Short Life Working Group required to be set up to take this work for and that an action plan required to be created.
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Action: The Director of People and Culture to provide an update on progressing this work at the next meeting.

> The Committee **noted**:
> • Progress with identifying a key barrier to turas appraisal and PDP completion rates improving and further guidance provided to address incomplete sign-offs
> • Additional management level reporting which was assisting in identifying areas to focus on and progress discussions with managers on completing appraisals
> • Work required to understand from managers and staff at all levels what barriers exist to completing appraisals and PDPs and took **moderate** assurance.

4 Spotlight Session – None

It was noted that there had been challenges securing some of the spotlight sessions and the Chair queried whether a review of the spotlight sessions going forward would aid in understanding the implementation of some of the strategies that had come to committee for review and agreement going forward.

5 ITEMS FOR REVIEW AND ASSURANCE

5.1 People and Culture Portfolio Board Update
Report by Gaye Boyd, Deputy Director of People

The Director of People and Culture explained that there had been significant work in relation to strategic planning and development done with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy being approved, it was noted that the Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and the Employability Strategy were both on the agenda.

More work would be done in relation to Learning and Development over the coming year with guidance having been issued by Scottish Government in relation to Workforce Planning and discussions taking place on how to progress this work. There would be an Acute Workforce Planning Group which would identify gaps and refresh strategy going forward.

The Deputy Director of People highlighted Appendix two which was the summary of the meeting that had taken place in January, this was sent out to the Local Partnership Forums (LPFs) and the Senior Leadership Teams (SLTs) to distribute across the organisation.

The Chair queried the movement of the strategies into "business as usual" in order that any other issues arising could be identified moving forward. It was note that this was a challenging question with the Director of People and Culture suggesting that the Leadership and Culture work may progress to business as usual although there were items that required to be addressed going forward. The Heath and Care Staffing Act was another workstream that would progress to business as usual. It was important to identify the changes that had been embedded before moving forward.

S Walsh queried EDI citing the example of events that were ongoing in a different Board and asked if this would affect any of the work that was being done. The Director of People and Culture explained that it was a complex situation which the Board were aware of. As the events were still ongoing there had been no national position taken at this time.

The Committee **Noted** the content of the report and took **Moderate** Assurance.

5.2   **Integrated Performance and Quality Report**
Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture spoke to the paper wherein it was highlighted:

- Time to Fill had decreased and the recruitment team were continuing to analyse the data to maintain this decrease
- There had been an audit completed on Absence Management which had gone through the Audit Committee and there were a few actions to be completed
- Work was ongoing to look at the supervisory structure as challenges had been noted in the recording and divulging of reasons for sickness absence.
- Mandatory Training figures were increasing for completion, work was ongoing on e-modules

The Chair queried the Adult Social Care Data which had been an action from a previous meeting requesting assurance that the data had been scrutinised and was accurate. The Chief Officer for Highland Health and Social Care Partnership (HHSCP) assured committee that the agenda for the Service Leadership Team (SLT) had been refocused along with workforce performance. This allowed for regular scrutiny of the various areas across the organisation. Work had been done to look at the low figures of completion of appraisals to identify why these rates remained low.

The Head of Service – Social Care explained that a focus had been firstly placed on the statutory mandatory training making sure that the appropriate framework was in place to support managers. Focus was now being placed on appraisals again making sure that the correct framework and support was in place.

She went on to highlight the supervision component of Adult Social Care with it being a regulated and registered service. There was a difference between supervision and PDP and Adult Social Care were performing very well regarding supervision. A lot of work had been

done regarding supporting career pathways for staff within Adult Social Care. The Director of People and Culture agreed and highlighted that some of the work done around supervision was exemplary citing that some of the work could be replicated within other areas of the organisation.

The Committee agreed to close the action relating to Adult Social Care Metrics on the action plan.

J Preston queried the low rates of completion of the EDI questionnaire and why staff were not completing this. The Director of People and Culture explained that a Workforce Monitoring report had been completed recently as it was a statutory obligation of the Board to publish the information. On entry into the organisation staff were asked to complete the questionnaire and had a choice of whether to divulge information or not, it was noted that most Boards struggle to capture information especially with regard to disability.

| The Committee **noted** the content of the report and took **moderate** assurance |

5.3 Workforce Policies Review
Report by Gaye Boyd, Deputy Director of People

The Deputy Director of People explained that this was the 6-monthly update and that the HR Subgroup were responsible for progressing local policies for NHS Highland which were then taken to the Area Partnership Forum to be ratified. It was noted that since the year 2020 the number of policies had reduced due to the publication of the Once for Scotland Policies which NHS Highland then implement. There were seven policies that were past their review date with six of them currently under review. These were within the appendix of the report and a workplan was in place to ensure that these policies were progressed.

The Chair asked for clarification around "monitoring" querying whether the HR Subgroup monitored only the policy or the implementation of the policies. The Director of People and Culture explained that the policies review was to ensure that the policies were up to date and to provide assurance to committee that this process was in place. Regarding implementation of policies this would be come through various sources of data. Work would be done over the coming year on SSTS and quality management. The Deputy Director of People explained that the HR Subgroup were currently reviewing two policies due to challenges and issues that had arisen from their use within the organisation and that was part of the remit of the HR Subgroup.

| The Committee **noted** the content of the report and took **substantial** assurance. |

5.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Gender Pay Gap
Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture explained that there had been work done at a national level with a standardisation of how the report was presented. It was noted that there were societal contributions to the pay gap, Agenda for Change terms and conditions were standardised nationally so there was a need to understand why there was a pay gap in various job families and how this pay gap could be bridged going forward to ensure a more diverse workforce.

| The Committee **noted** the content of the report and took **substantial** assurance. |

5.5   Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (Final)
Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

This was discussed as part of Item 5.5.1

> The Committee **approved** the strategy document for publication and took **substantial** assurance.

5.5.1   Equality Outcomes 2021-2025 and 2025-2029
Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

It was noted that there were two parts to the report, one report looking at work that had been done 2021-25 the other looking at the work required to be done from 2025-29.

The Deputy Director of People explained that the report historically would have been contained within the Public Health report but had now been separated. It was noted that there were three workforce outcomes that would roll over as they had not yet completed.

The Chair queried the change in the approach and why this report was now separate from the Public Health report. The Director of People and Culture stated that previously the focus had been on public health but there was now a focus on the employer responsibilities of the Board, this report was part of this refocus.

The Director of People and Culture explained that a draft had come to committee previously and requested approval from committee. The Deputy Director of People explained that the feedback had gone to the EDI oversight group before being taken to the governance committees. It was noted that the Chair would have liked to read the feedback received along with the final version of the report.

Regarding the 2025-29 report the Director of People and Culture explained that there would be an update in two years' time, an action plan was in place and the update would be giving assurance that progress was being made in the work to be done.

> The Committee **approved** the strategy document for publication and took **substantial** assurance

Comfort break 11.20am until 11.30am

The Chief Executive took the opportunity on behalf of the committee to thank the Chair for all her hard work during her time chairing this committee. The Chair thanked everyone and wished them all the best going forward.

5.6   Employability Strategy (Final)
Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture explained that the strategy was important for NHS Highland as it was a major employer in the area. S Walsh queried the interaction with other partners asking if it was possible to bring all partners together rather than the interaction with a few at a time. The Director of People and Culture agreed that there were opportunities to build relationships with other partners and it was important that work was done to highlight the connections more clearly to identify shared interests.

The Chair welcomed the work done and suggested that those who are carers within the organisation could be another group that was supported. The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of identifying those being targeted by strategies citing examples of other industries and employers who were also trying to target younger potential employees. Identifying actual

numbers instead of making assumptions would clarify the potential market and workforce that was available going forward.

> The Committee **approved** the strategy document for publication and took **substantial** assurance.

5.7   Communications and Engagement 6-monthly Update / Staff Engagement Plan Update
Report by Ruth Fry, Head of Communications and Engagement

The Head of Communications and Engagement spoke to the report wherein it was highlighted:

- One action had been paused – the development of an intranet hub using Sharepoint. However, this would now move forward later in the year once the licences had been approved.
- One action could not be progressed – Microsoft Viva Apps, this could not be progressed due to national licensing restrictions
- The areas which had consistently scored low on the iMatter survey had been looked at in more depth, these were visibility of leaders, being involved in decision making, performance management and celebrating success.
- Facilitated sessions had been run covering these topics which had involved approximately 235 staff. Thanks were expressed to those in the education, learning and development team who aided in facilitating these sessions.
- Feedback was consistent across the sessions – staff would like to see more of Executives and Directors face to face. There had also been a need to have organisational charts up to date so that staff could see where decisions had been made and more communication around the bigger picture for NHS Highland.
- A draft plan had been created from the outcomes with the ask of committee to agree said plan.

The Director of People and Culture highlighted the successful test of change that had been completed and the need to make sure that going forward these changes could be monitored to ensure that work was progressing. P Macrae highlighted the feedback regarding the visibility of Executives and Managers citing that on site visits staff often did not know who he was and queried whether there were other ways to show visibility across the organisation.

The Director of People and Culture agreed and explained that Executive visits were looked at previously and the creation of the Head of Corporate Governance post would help with this. He suggested reverse mentoring as a way forward noting that this topic was continually a work in progress which was being looked at in more detail.

The Chair queried the Microsoft Viva pilot and asked for clarification of what it would have been used for. The Head of Communications and Engagement explained that Microsoft Viva pulls together content into a e-newsletter that would then have been circulated to the relevant staff, she gave an example of the GP Bulletin which was sent out to GP practices with specific information relating to that staff group. The software would have made it easier to be information specific with staff groups. It was possible that Sharepoint could be used to generate information specific newsletters for staff groups moving forward.

Internal communication and how to navigate adverse events was discussed with it being noted that there were discussions ongoing at a national level in relation to information shared across Boards. The Head of Communications and Engagement explained that there were networks and protocols in place should there be a major incident. Resilience was being looked at in relation to communication across the various areas within the organisation.

The Chair queried whether it would be helpful to sense check the action plan with the staff who had given feedback. The Head of Communications and Engagement stated that would be possible to invite those involved in the feedback to comment on the action plan. The Director of People and Culture explained that it was process that would be refined as the process continued.

The Chair queried whether the feedback received would be communicated to managers going forward and if so, which format this would take. The Head of Communication and Engagement explained that the action plan and the feedback would be communicated widely across the organisation. The feedback would also be used to support different strands of the work going forward.

Committee thanked the Head of Communication and Engagement for all her work and wished her all the best for her new role out with the organisation.

> The Committee took **substantial** assurance of progress against the Communications and Engagement Strategy and **agreed** the Staff Engagement Plan.

Whistleblowing Q3 Report

5.8 Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture spoke to the report wherein it was highlighted:

- The data covered the period October 31st until December 2024
- One case had been closed and there were no active investigations ongoing.
- Two referrals had been received from the Independent Whistleblowing Officer (INWO), one had closed, and the other one was heading towards closure.
- Within the appendix there were two cases in the table, the first one was complete with an action on the action plan and the second one was completed and would be written up in due course.

The Director of People and Culture explained that since the report had been written INWO had asked for one case which had been titled "under review" to progress to an investigation. There had been a lot of work undertaken to address the concerns that had been raised. This would be in the next report that would go to INWO. The Director of People and Culture went on to clarify that it was the whistleblowers decision of whether to accept a decision or whether to ask INWO to investigate further. Where concerns were upheld there was an action plan put in place.

> The Committee took **moderate** assurance – and **noted** the content of the report gave confidence of compliance with legislation, policy and Board objectives **noting** challenges with timescales due to the complexity of cases and investigations.

Confidential Contacts Report

5.9 Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture spoke to the report wherein it was highlighted that both the Area Clinical Forum (ACF) and the Area Partnership Forum (APF) had taken assurance that the process of an options appraisal and discussion had been robust.

> The Committee accepted **substantial** assurance in relation to the process followed to develop and evaluate options for future delivery of our confidential contact's service. **Noted** the preferred option to establish an in-house funded confidential contact's service which will be progressed.

Health and Care Staffing Act Annual Report

5.10 Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture explained that there had been discussion around the scheduling of the Annual report so this was a Q3report and an Annual Report in one. The implementation of the act was in April last year and this report gave clarity on the actions that had been taken to strengthen the approach to the Health and Care Staffing Act.

The Chair thanked everyone across the organisation involved in the implementation of the Health and Care Staffing Act.

> The Committee **noted** the requirements placed on the board by the Act. The Committee took **moderate** assurance and reviewed and scrutinised the information provided in the paper and appendices.

5.11 Strategic Risk Review
Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Director of People and Culture spoke to the report wherein it was highlighted that risk no 156 was proposed to lessen, there had been significant work done on statutory and mandatory training and there would be further focus on this. It was noted that many of the actions had been on todays agenda and there was still work to be done on them.

> The Committee **noted** the content of the report and took **moderate** assurance from
> • The review and refresh of the people and culture strategic risks
> • Ongoing work to finalise level 2 risk

5.12 Staff Governance Committee Annual Report
Report by Gareth Adkins, Director of People and Culture

The Chair thanked the Board Secretary for drafting the report and thanked her for all her contributions to the organisation, wishing her well for the future. It was noted that the Board Secretary would be leaving her post in April.

> The committee **noted** the report.

5.13 Staff Governance Committee Self-Assessment Report
Report by Ann Clark, Chair of Staff Governance Committee

The Chair confirmed the committee self-assessment process had been undertaken; seven responses were received out of a possible 21. The Chair highlighted the following areas of action:

Refresh of roles and responsibilities of Committee Members and attendees in a development session.
Additional deliberate discussion at agenda planning sessions on timings of the agenda and discipline on including expected timings.There was no further feedback and no further questions.

> The Committee:
> • Discussed the proposed areas of focus for the 25/26 action plan and **agreed** any necessary actions arising from the Committee Self-Assessment.
> • The Committee took **moderate** assurance that the self-assessment for 2024 had been completed appropriately. The assurance level would be raised to substantial following implementation of any agreed actions.

6 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION AND NOTING

6.1   Area Partnership Forum update of meeting held on 14th February 2025

The Deputy Director of People explained that most of the items discussed at the Area Partnership Forum had been discussed at todays meeting. Guidance on Employee Files had been agreed at the Forum which contained general guidance for managers. There had also been guidance in respect of Visa requirement and the recruitment process. The Change of Base Policy had been ratified and there had been discussion around the Leadership Engagement Group Terms of Reference. There had been an overview of the Annual Delivery Plan for 2025/26 with an update on the three workstreams related to the Agenda For Change reform, which were the Reduction in the Working Week, the Band 5 Nursing Review and Protected Learning Time.

The Director of People and Culture explained that there had been discussion around the production of a Summary Report from the Governance Committees. The Summary Report would go to the Board with only approved minutes going to the Board going forward. This would be replicated for the groups feeding into the committees, going forward this would apply to the Area Partnership Forum with only agreed minutes coming to committee.

6.2   Health and Safety Committee minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2025

The Director of People and Culture explained that there had been challenges in respect of management capacity in Argyll and Bute due to changes in roles. There had been challenges in respect of reporting and this was being addressed currently for Health and Safety. An update would come back to committee outlining the priorities. He went on to give thanks to Executive staff who had helped with the Health and Safety Group Governance arrangements in the Acute and Corporate areas.

Action: The Director of People and Culture to bring an update to the next committee outlining the priorities in respect of Health and Safety reports from Argyll and Bute.

7   ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

None

7.1   Review / Summary of meeting for Chair to highlight to the Board

The Chair confirmed that the following items would be highlighted to Board:

- Appraisal/PDP Improvement Plan Progress
- Staff Engagement Pilot
- Confidential Contacts Agreement

The Chair thanked the Director of People and Culture, the Deputy Director of People and the Committee Administrator for all their support to her over her time as Chair. She went on to thank the wider group of attendees, the Executive Directors and their substitutes and staffside noting that the success of the committee was with the participation of all.

8.   Date & Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 6 May 2025 at 10 am via Microsoft Teams.

9.   Future Meeting Schedule

The Committee **Noted** the remaining meeting schedule for 2025 as follows:

1 July 2025
2 September 2025
4 November 2025

Close of Meeting 12.35pm