

SUMMARY REPORT OF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Name of Committee	Highland Health and Social Care
Date of Meeting	04 March 2026
Committee Chair	Gerry O’Brien

KEY POINTS FROM DISCUSSION AND ESCALATION

ALERT

- Significant and worsening financial overspend, including ASC overspend of £25.792m and HSCP projected overspend of £29.649m.
- Delayed discharge pressures remained a major system outlier, impacting community hospitals and flow.
- Workforce shortages across ASC and community services continued to drive multiple risks.
- Rising guardianship and adults with incapacity cases created statutory pressure.

ASSURE

- Finance Report – Month 9 2025/2026 (Limited)
- Integrated Performance and Quality Report (Limited)
- SDS Assurance Report 25/26 (Moderate)
- Highland Care Model Update (Moderate)
- Carers Strategy Update (Moderate)
- Community Services Report (Moderate)

ADVISE

- Need for clearer financial reporting, including actual savings achieved and consistent district out-turns.
- Need for clearer risk-mitigation tracking, linking risks to actions and progress.
- Recommendation to strengthen engagement culture, including better representation of vulnerable groups.
- Advice that community hospital strategy and pathway variation require further strategic work.

RISKS

- Financial risk: large savings gaps, delayed implementation, and reliance on supplementary staffing.
- Workforce risk: shortages affecting SDS delivery, ASC, community services, and engagement capacity.
- System flow risk: high delayed discharge numbers and potential backlog or unmet need.
- Digital risk: uncertainty around CareFirst replacement and NHS system interface.
- Service sustainability risk: fuel costs, care-at-home capacity, and third-sector fragility.

ACTIONS

- Chief Officer and Committee Chair to discuss topics for next Development session.
- Committee to follow up with Director of People and Culture, to clarify the Act’s implications for social care, ensure accurate monitoring, and confirm whether current budget and staffing levels meet statutory requirements.

LEARNING

- A number of development session topics were highlighted by the Committee including risk-register mitigations and assurance processes; Understanding Rising Delayed Discharge Trends and Hidden Demand; Deep Dive into Unpaid Carers.