Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB)
Confirmed Minutes of the Health Board Meeting
held on 25 June 2026 in Venue Cymru

Board Members present	
Name	**Title**
Dyfed Edwards	Chair
Clare Budden	Independent Member
Russell Caldicott	Executive Director of Finance
Clara Day	Executive Medical Director
Debbie Eyitayo	Executive Director of People and Organisational Development
Dyfed Jones	Independent Member
Paul Lambert	Independent Member
Dr Jane Moore	Executive Director of Public Health
Billy Nichols	Independent Member
Teresa Owen	Executive Director of Allied Health Professionals and Health Science
Carol Shillabeer	Chief Executive (remotely)
Paolo Tardivel	Interim Executive Director of Transformation and Strategic Planning
Caroline Turner	Independent Member
Rhian Watcyn Jones	Independent Member
Pam Wenger	Director of Corporate Governance
Gareth Williams	Vice Chair
In Attendance	
Laura Jones	Corporate Governance Manager
Stuart Keen	Director of Environment and Estates
Chris Lynes	Deputy Executive Director of Nursing
Justine Parry	Acting Director of Digital. Data and Technology
Philippa Peake-Jones	Head of Corporate Governance
Helen Stevens-Jones	Director of Partnerships, Engagement & Communications

26.124 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed Board Members, members of the public and those viewing online to the meeting.

Apologies were received for Angela Wood, Tehmeena Ajmal, Mike Larvin, Urtha Felda and Emma Adamson.

The Chair highlighted that the Health Board has a statutory requirement to prepare a set of Annual Financial Statements and an Annual Report and this was the primary focus of this meeting. These documents require approval by the Board for submission to Audit Wales and Welsh Government. The agenda also includes an urgent item relating to the Emergency Department Business Case.

26.125 Declarations of Interest relating to the Agenda

No declarations of interest were raised.

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ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

26.126 Audit Committee Assurance Report

The Board received the report and the Chair of the Audit Committee highlighted:

- The Annual Accounts and the Annual Report have been considered by the relevant Committees and the significant amount of work undertaken by Finance colleagues in preparing the accounts was acknowledged.
- The Health Board has not achieved its first financial duty to break even, starting the year with a break-even budget and ending with a deficit of £17.3m.
- There is now a requirement for the Health Board to reinforce its grip on financial recovery alongside strengthening risk management.
- Management responses to Internal Audits are not being received at the required level noting that further support is required in this area.

It was resolved that the Board:

- **NOTED** that the Audit Committee approved the Annual Report and Accounts for onward submission to the Board.

26.127 Audited Annual Accounts Submission 2025-2026

The Board received the report and the Executive Director of Finance highlighted:

- Thanks to colleagues for their contribution in completing the documentation for the accounts within the required timeframe, and also to Audit Wales colleagues for their support.
- The 2025-26 unaudited annual accounts were submitted to Welsh Government and Audit Wales on 1 May 2026 and have attained a £17.3m deficit position.
- There were no amendments to the reported outturn position which remains unchanged between the unaudited and final submission.
- If the Health Board agree to endorse the accounts, these will be submitted to Audit Wales and the Auditor General to sign off by 30 June 2026.
- Audit Wales have reported two uncorrected misstatements resulting from the way in which the Health Board's capital asset register software calculates and reports certain types of transactions, these issues are contained within a specific note of the accounts and do not impact on the overall net book value of fixed assets.
- The Health Board's annual accounts for 2025-26 will receive an unqualified true and fair opinion, this means that the Auditor General is satisfied they reflect the current position of the Health Board and the net operating costs for the year.
- The accounts will receive a qualified regulatory opinion as the Health Board did not achieve its first financial duty to break-even over the three-year period 2023-24 to 2025-26.

As part of the discussion, the Board:

Noted the decrease in spend in relation to Primary Care and General Medical Services recognising that resources are not adequately being transferred from Secondary Care into Primary Care referring to the Welsh Government target to increase spend in Primary Care by 0.5%. It was confirmed that the Board have set a strategic intention to invest in the development of Primary and Community Care services and allocation of resource across the Health Board is crucial to underpin this work. General Medical Services allocation has been agreed and there is a need to ensure clear visibility on the impact of the funding.

- Confirmed that in accordance with the recommendation of the Audit Committee, the Health Board is requested to adopt the 2025-26 audited annual financial statements.

It was resolved that the Board:

- **ADOPTED** the 2025-26 audited annual financial statements.

26.128 Annual Report 2025-2026

The Board received the report and the Director of Corporate Governance highlighted:

- Thanks to colleagues involved in preparing the report and acknowledged the support received from External and Internal Audit, demonstrating the positive working relationships taking place.
- The Audit Committee met on 23 June 2026 and had the opportunity to review the Annual Report and Accounts confirming that the documentation has been subject to the appropriate governance processes.
- The Annual Report provides the Board with a comprehensive view of the Health Board's position ending 31 March 2026.
- The financial accounts will be incorporated into the documentation prior to submission to the Auditor General for sign off and will form part of the NHS Wales Manual for Accounts as required.
- Progress has been made throughout the year with compliance against statutory duties addressed within the Annual Report.
- The Audit Committee have received regular reports relating to Standing Orders and Standing Financial Instructions.
- Additional Internal Audit reviews have been undertaken in areas of identified risk and concern, including procurement, reflecting a proactive approach to maintaining high standards of governance and regulatory changes.
- Risk management was recognised as a key element and this requires continued focus and will remain a priority for the Executive Committee and Audit Committee during the year.
- The Report presents an honest and fair position, demonstrating the progress made whilst also recognising the operational challenges that remain and require regular Board review.
- The Annual Quality Report will be presented to the Board in July to provide a focus in this area.
- Planned Care continues to be an area of high concern, there has been a focus on reducing patients waiting more than 156 weeks and 104 weeks with significant reductions in both cohorts noting over 30,000 people have had appointments during the year and capacity is being increased to work on eradicating this length of wait.
- During 2025/26 more than 55,000 patients were referred to the Health Board with suspected Cancer. Each month over 4500 people are tested and approximately 4000 patients are being given the positive news that Cancer was not detected. There is a challenge to meet the National target in this area and plans are being put in place to make improvements.
- Mental Health performance continues to meet access standards in relation to Adult Services noting that there have also been some improvements in Children's Service however performance against neurodevelopment assessments is low noting that this is a UK wide issue and Health Boards in Wales are working to address this area of concern.
- Urgent and Emergency Care continues to be an area requiring sustained focus and additional support will be discussed in further detail during the meeting.

- Improvements are being seen in relation to internal controls however significant work is required to become a high performing organisation underpinned by strong governance.

As part of the discussion, the Board:

- Noted that the Planning, Population Health and Partnerships Committee have received a copy of the People's Experience Report from the Emergency Department and welcomed the insight it provided into people's experiences of using healthcare services. It was highlighted that feedback was generally positive, with the exception of Emergency Department services where experience remained very poor. Members emphasised the importance of focusing improvement efforts in these areas of greatest concern.
- Referred to the number of people with suspected Cancer and the high number of people where Cancer was not detected and queried whether more accurate referrals are required. It was confirmed that the suspected Cancer pathways are designed to support early diagnosis or early exclusion of Cancer, with referrals being triaged to ensure patients are seen more rapidly through routine pathways where appropriate, supported by ongoing work with Primary Care and specialist nurses to determine whether escalation to the urgent suspected Cancer route is required.
- Highlighted that Mental Health Services, including services for young people, have improved over recent years, supported by positive feedback from Healthcare Inspectorate Wales. However, it was recognised that current metrics remain limited and community services continue to be under significant pressure. It was confirmed that Welsh Government are taking forward a new community-based approach supported by staff focused on improving timely access to care.
- Noted that Delayed Transfers of Care continue to adversely impact both patients and the Health Board, with increasing numbers of people remaining in hospital beds despite no longer requiring acute care. It was confirmed that there are positive examples of services being transferred back into the community, supported by changes to pooled budget regulations and further work is required in this area.
- Highlighted the section referring to data breaches noting that the correct figure is five and the narrative will be amended to align with the information in the table, noting that this has been discussed with Audit Wales.
- Expressed gratitude to colleagues for the significant work undertaken and noted that the report provided a detailed snapshot of the current position, as well as a useful tool to support planning and delivery over the coming year.

It was resolved that the Board:

- **APPROVED** the Annual Report 2025-26 in readiness for submission to Audit Wales and Welsh Government.
- **APPROVED** the Annual Financial Statements in readiness for submission to Audit Wales and Welsh Government.
- **APPROVED** the Letter of Representation for signing by the Chair and Chief Executive, on behalf of the Board.

INTERNAL AUDIT

26.129 Head of Internal Audit Opinion and Annual Report 2025-2026

The Board received the report and the Director of Corporate Governance highlighted:

- The Audit Committee received the Head of Internal Audit Opinion Report in full, and it is being presented to the Board for completeness and will also be included in the Annual Report.

As part of the discussion, the Board:

- Noted that progress is being made in areas where limited assurance has previously been identified, and this is recognised within the report however reference is made to Internal Audits completed by other NHS Wales bodies that provide a more negative position. It was confirmed that the audits completed highlight common themes across Wales and this is being reviewed in further detail.

It was resolved that the Board:

- **NOTED** the content of the report.
- **RECEIVED** the Head of Internal Audit Opinion for 2025/26.

EXTERNAL AUDIT

26.130 ISA 260 Audit of Financial Statements

The Board received the report and the Director of Corporate Governance highlighted:

- The report has been received in full by the Audit Committee and was presented to provide full visibility of the findings, with areas for improvement to be progressed through the Committee over the coming year.
- Assurance was also provided to the Audit Committee in relation to Senior appointments, recognising the progress made in this area over recent years.
- The Audit Wales materiality level, set out on page seven and based on the 2025-26 draft financial statements had been calculated at 1% of the Health Board’s turnover, reflecting the scale of the organisation’s £26.5m spend, with a reporting threshold of 5% equating to £1.3m. Any areas of concern above this threshold would have been identified within the report.
- The report will be incorporated into the Annual Report.

It was resolved that the Board:

- **NOTED** the content of the report.
- **RECEIVED** the ISA 260 noting that it had been considered at the Audit Committee.

URGENT AND EMERGENCY CARE

26.131 Emergency Department Business Case

The Board received the report and the Executive Medical Director highlighted:

- Thanks to all staff working across the Health Board’s Emergency Departments for the commitment to working for the population of North Wales, recognising that whilst patients are experiencing prolonged waits, they continue to provide encouraging feedback on the care being received.
- Sustained staffing is required across Emergency Departments noting that patient attendances have only increased marginally however occupancy and the number of patients requiring nursing care at any one time has risen significantly due to prolonged waits.

- The Business Case proposes an increase in registered nurses and Health Care Support Workers to provide safe and appropriate care for patients waiting for extended periods within Emergency Departments.
- Non-consultant medical rotas require the appropriate number of staff to reflect attendance patterns and ensure compliance with Working Time Directive requirements.
- National guidance and recommendations have been applied across all areas, with staffing currently increased through temporary arrangements however, using substantive staff is recognised as the most effective way to support productive care and reduce rota gaps.
- The financial requirement is substantial as the proposed investment requires a total spend of £32.9m against the current recurrent budget of £24.8m noting that a proportion of this funding is already reflected within the Integrated Health Communities budgets.
- It was recognised that funding alone will not resolve these challenges and that this forms part of a broader programme of work within Emergency Departments and across the wider system, underpinned by the standards of care required.
- Further work will be undertaken following recommendations from the Ysbyty Glan Clwyd inspection and in line with Getting it Right First Time (GIRFT) standards, which also highlight wider system flow issues.
- The Board recognises the wider programmes of work underway, working in partnership with Local Authorities. 90-day plans are also being put in place which will need to be adapted as required and monitored through the Executive Committee.

As part of the discussion, the Board:

- Expressed thanks to all staff for their work in this area noting that this is a long standing issue and queried what improvements will be made from this important investment to improve experiences for patients and staff. It was confirmed that establishing a stable substantive workforce within Emergency Departments would support consistent delivery against standards, improve productivity and enable skilled staff to undertake key roles such as triage, thereby strengthening team-based working and improving care for patients and staff.
- Emphasised that while the Business Case focuses on Emergency Departments, the underlying challenges span the whole patient pathway. Patients remaining in hospital beds directly contributes to Emergency Department overcrowding and patient safety risks therefore immediate steps are required to improve safety within departments, alongside wider pathway changes, evidence-based staffing models, a review of the financial implications and a clear implementation plan, noting that the Executive Committee recognise this as a key priority.
- Welcomed the proposed investment noting that this is an important element of a broader programme of work, with further collaboration with Local Authorities required to improve system flow and support sustainable improvement. It was noted that that this has been a persistent area of challenge despite only a marginal increase in attendances, it was also recognised that this represents only one element of the wider action required to address the overall challenges within Emergency Departments.
- Queried why the Business Case set out the minimum staffing requirement rather than the optimum position which would provide greater flexibility, and why the investment had not been incorporated into the annual budget-setting process. It was confirmed that provision had been sought within the plan however, as the case has developed and additional requirements have been identified, the financial requirement has increased above the original requirement, resulting in a shortfall.

- Noted that greater sustainability could be achieved by replacing temporary staffing arrangements with substantive posts, both within Emergency Departments and across wider service areas. It was also recognised that the Health Board remains consistently below establishment while exceeding funded staffing levels, with some gaps linked to recruitment challenges. It was noted that specific focus will be required where reliance on high-cost temporary staffing continues highlighting that the Foundations for the Future Programme will help to address issues related to structures.
- Highlighted the importance of improving the quality of care however, concerns were raised around the use of corridor care. It was confirmed that this is part of a wider programme of work to ensure patients are cared for safely and appropriately in all areas.
- Confirmed that the identified savings requirement would need to be underwritten and would present a further challenge, noting that Welsh Government have asked all Health Boards to provide a clear trajectory by 30 June 2026 noting that this will be brought back to the Board for agreement. It was also noted that, while there has not been a significant increase in Emergency Department footfall, challenges remain with patient flow out of hospital therefore this investment is being progressed alongside wider flow improvement work, with the final requirement of up to £3.9m dependent on progress in that area.
- Stated that the Business Case demonstrates a more mature approach to assessing services against agreed standards as part of the Quality Management System, with the need to review substantive staffing to support delivery; however, the core challenge remains as the need to improve flow across the whole system.
- Requested that the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales Reports are shared more widely and it was agreed to share these with Board Members for information.
- Agreed that the Performance, Finance and Information Governance Committee have oversight of this work and will report to the Board on a regular basis noting that this work will now proceed in a comprehensive manner across the Health Board.

Action:

- **26.131** The Director of Corporate Governance to share the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales Reports with Board Members for information.

It was resolved that the Board:

- **NOTE** the sustained and material patient safety risk within Emergency Departments, as previously reported and reinforced through Escalation Board oversight and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) findings.
- **APPROVE** recurrent investment of up to **£3.9m** to stabilise Emergency Department workforce capacity as a necessary response to this risk.
- **ACKNOWLEDGE** that this investment is not within current financial plans and will require organisational reprioritisation and an increase in the savings requirement.
- **AGREE** a phased implementation approach, underpinned by clear expectations on delivery, benefits realisation and performance improvement.
- **REQUIRE** the Executive to develop and deliver a clear **benefits realisation plan**, demonstrating how the investment will improve Emergency Department performance and reduce patient safety risk, with defined measures, trajectories and clear accountability.
- **AGREE** that oversight and assurance will be provided through the Performance, Finance and Information Governance Committee, with clear lines of accountability.
- **REQUIRE** regular reporting to the Board on delivery and impact, including patient safety, workforce stability, operational performance and financial consequences.

- **ENDORSE** this investment as a necessary and immediate intervention to reduce avoidable patient harm and support wider Urgent and Emergency Care (UEC) improvement, recognising that it addresses a critical enabler but does not, in isolation, resolve underlying system flow constraints.

CLOSING BUSINESS

26.132 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 29 July 2026 in Queen's Market, Rhyl for the Annual General Meeting
Thursday 30 July 2026 at 9.30am in Venue Cymru for the Board Meeting.