

Committee minutes – Public

1st July 2026 – 4:00 pm

Hybrid: in person at Milburn House, Newcastle and online via Zoom

Committee members present.

Alex Hoole – Chair	(AH)	(in person)
Feyi Awotona	(FA)	(in person)
Emily Sinclair-James	(ES)	(in person)
Roo Begom	(RB)	online (via zoom)
Rogelio Rivera	(RR)	online (via zoom)
Tobi Oludade	(TO)	online (via zoom)

In attendance

Yvonne Probert	(YP)	CEO (in person)
Courtney Peel	(CP)	Chief Operating Officer (in person)
Avish Johnson	(AJ)	Tell Us North Business Manager (in person)

1. Welcome and introductions.

- 1.1. AH as Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from, Alisdair Cameron (AC), Meera Soundararajan (MS), Terry Bearpark (TB), Baran Hadid (BH), Ann Wynn (AW) and Dan Milburn (DM).

3. Minutes of previous meeting/matters arising.

- 3.1. Yet to receive any response from the ICB on what is meant by good practice in GP surgeries.
- 3.2. The Entre and View report language has been checked for consistency, including the use of acronyms.
- 3.3. Committee members are to continue providing any leads to DM for the Youthwatch project.
- 3.4. Locality data have been reviewed to identify any patterns in the issues arising.

- 3.5. Feedback from the committee was received regarding the Quality Accounts, and responses have been submitted.
- 3.6. The Stakeholder Survey report has been checked and updated.
- 3.7. The minutes from the Committee meeting held on 7th May 2026 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Electronic Decisions

- 4.1. The Annual Report for 2025/2026 was approved and is now complete and shared with partners.

5. Chair – Verbal update

- 5.1. Priority setting discussion:
 - 5.1.1. A discussion took place on how to set the annual priorities given the uncertainty surrounding the future of Healthwatch.
 - 5.1.2. It was agreed to hold a discussion at the Annual Joint Meeting (AJM) on the priorities set over the last two years and consider potential areas of focus going forward.
 - 5.1.3. The staff team will research what would be the best fit by reviewing the engagement data. The feasibility of potential priorities will also be reviewed before sharing ideas with the Committee.
 - 5.1.4. Topics such as hospitals, GPs and dentistry were identified as major issues that regularly arise through community engagement.
 - 5.1.5. A discussion also took place on whether to explore the topics in depth or keep the discussion brief for further consideration at the AJM.

Action – A background paper to be created outlining the topics gathered from the public and presented at the AJM for discussion.

- 5.2. The AJM will be held on 30 September 2026 at 4pm. Further details and the event registration link will be shared soon.
- 5.3. YP attended the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) meeting held on 10 June with Local Health watch and Healthwatch England. The topics discussed included:
 - 5.3.1. Informed that the Chair of Healthwatch England presented evidence to the Committee in Parliament.

- 5.3.2. Funding will continue to go to the local authorities until the new Bill is passed.
- 5.3.3. Enter and View powers may not need to be transferred, as the meeting were told Local Authorities and the ICB already have these powers.
- 5.4. The Quarter 4 monitoring report submitted to the Commissioner was shared with the Committee for information.
- 5.5. Healthwatch England Guidance document "Healthwatch Closure Checklist": A detailed document outlining the steps for closure was shared.
 - 5.5.1. YP noted that Tell Us North had already included the risks and potential closure costs within the existing budget process, and that many of the steps for the preparation for closure were already in place.
- 5.6. Call for evidence to MP's: The details were submitted by YP and the team before the 16 June deadline.
 - 5.6.1. YP had sent the details of the MPs' papers to the Committee
 - 5.6.2. The committee discussed changes in the political landscape, including new MPs, and how this might affect the future abolition of Healthwatch as well as the independent voice.

Action: YP will send the details on parliamentary updates through the weekly communication.

- 5.6.3. The Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW) social media page highlighted the importance of an independent voice.
- 5.6.4. The King's Fund has also highlighted the importance of an independent voice.
- 5.6.5. A discussion took place on whether the removal of governors from the NHS hospital Trusts may also affect the independent voice.
- 5.6.6. ES, a committee member, offered to assist with the closure process, should it become necessary, as they have previous experience.
- 5.6.7. These reports will also need to be presented to the Tell Us North Board, as the hosting organisation for Healthwatch Newcastle.

- 5.7. NENC Integrated Care Board (ICB) update
 - 5.7.1. There is a proposal to change the boundaries of the ICB.
 - 5.7.2. A discussion took place on whether the committee preferred the alignments of the ICB with the Local Authority boundaries or the North East and North Cumbria Combine Authority boundaries.
 - 5.7.3. YP attended a Healthwatch Regional Network meeting on 30 June, and it was agreed to respond to the ICB but not to define a preference so keeping the conversation open and monitoring how this boundary change may affect local Healthwatch.
- 5.8. The Annual Report was completed and submitted within the deadline and was shared with the Committee.
- 5.9. The committee thanked the staff team and everyone who contributed to the Annual Report.

6. Locality working update

CP presented the locality update on behalf of DM.

- 6.1. Locality work is continuing with good levels of engagement, with a total of 34 sessions held across 16 venues, engaging with 1,335 members of the public during April and May.
- 6.2. DM is also reviewing existing venues and exploring opportunities to expand into new localities. For further details, please contact DM.

7. Project Update

- 7.1. Accessible Information & Health Literacy: The project is complete, and the report was published on 3 June 2026.
- 7.2. Adult Social Care: The project is currently in the engagement period, which will continue until Wednesday, 1 July 2026. Over 200 surveys have been completed so far. Data analysis is due to begin in the first week of July, with the report aimed for completion in August.
- 7.3. Physiotherapy: The scope has been completed and will be circulated to the Committee shortly. Work is ongoing to finalise the questions and plan the engagement phase.
- 7.4. Reasonable adjustments phase 2: report had been published on 9 June 2026.
- 7.5. Enter & View: The report on the Castle Dene has been published on the website, with a re-visit to be completed. A second Enter & View venue has been visited and the report is currently under review so will be published

shortly. An Enter & View visit to a GP practice is also just completed with report drafting taking place. Finally, a new venue is to be scoped and dates are being considered to identify a potential visit.

- 7.6. Youthwatch: Engagement activity is expected to decrease during the summer holiday period. However, other events, such as Mela and Pride, will take priority, while the engagement team continues to explore opportunities for Youthwatch.
- 7.7. ICB project update: The Patient Transport project is currently in the engagement phase. The Modern General Practice Access (MGPA) report has been published, while the End of Life Care, Dentistry and North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) reports are yet to be published.
- 7.8. Project Tracker: Changes to the project timelines since the previous meeting were highlighted and presented to the Committee.

8. Finance Update

- 8.1. AJ informed the Committee that the Quarter 1 data had not yet been prepared, as the quarter had only recently ended. AJ confirmed that income and expenditure were as expected, with nothing of concern to report.

Action – AJ to share the Quarter 1 finance report once completed.

9. Standing Items

- 9.1. Nothing to report regarding Safeguarding, Health and Safety, or Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- 9.2. There are no Freedom of Information requests.

10. Any other business

- 10.1. mentioned that the new committee members induction is yet to be completed.

Action: CP to send out date and time and other details to the new committee members for the induction.

11. Date and time of next meeting.

- 11.1. Wednesday 14th October 2026 at 4:00 pm at Milburn House.