St Raphael's Hospice

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Trustees

Held at 13:30 on 22nd October 2025

at St Raphael's Hospice

Trustees:

Norman McWhinney (NM) *(Chair)*

Sister Veronica Hagen (Sr VH)

Carrie Chill (CC)

Sister Kathleen O'Reilly (Sr K'OR)

Alan Cogbill (AC) *(Vice-Chair)*

Grahame Darnell (GD)

Manjit Lall (ML)

Paul Holmes (PH)

Steve Chambers (SC)

Bernard Marley (BM - apologies)

In attendance:

Rebecca Trower (RT) *(Joint CEO)*

Nick Stevens (NS) *(Joint CEO)*

Kate Billingham Wilson (KBW) *(Director of Fundraising & Communications - apologies*)

Ed Cook (EC) *(Advisor to DoC & Finance Committee member)*

John Groom (JG) (*Director of IT & Estates)*

Sara Jane Harris (SJH) *(Director of Income Generation)*

Natalie Page (NP) *(Head of People Services)*

Gaby Tamura-Rose (GT-R) *(Lead Consultant)*

Alex Rudkin *(Director of Quality & Governance)*

Anna Machin (AM) (*Governance - observing*)

Karen Monaghan (KM) *(Governance)*

Agenda item	Action	Responsible	Timeline	Ref.
5	NM to sign and NS to submit to the auditors.	NM/NS	22/10/25	22/10/25.01
8	Circulate meeting invitations in the next two weeks.	KM	07/11/25	22/10/25.02
8	Provide a structured training programme for the next Board meeting.	KM	14/01/25	22/10/25.03

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Bernard Marley and Kate Billingham Wilson.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to items on the meeting agenda.

3. Minutes of Board meeting held on 15th July 2025 & Actions List

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 15 July 2025 were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record. The Chair noted a minor correction, and outstanding actions were reviewed and updates provided throughout the meeting.

4. Executive Report

4.1. Financial Summary: NS presented a comprehensive year-to-date financial update - income remains above budget while expenditure is below budget, producing a shortfall of £207k, which is less than projected. Following constructive discussions with Katy Fisher, the Integrated Care Board (ICB) increased the funding uplift from 2.83% to just under 5%, equating to £88k. While costs exceed this amount, the Board noted this was a positive development in a challenging funding context. All hospices in the area have accepted the offer.

The capital grant of £397k received from Hospice UK for the financial year 2025/26, has seen several projects being undertaken. JG outlined progress across projects, with all expected to be completed by March 2026. Alignment with grant conditions have been closely monitored.

The Board noted that the Government has recognised sector pressures, allocating £100m in capital funds via Hospice UK. Although not available for operational use, this demonstrates growing awareness of sector challenges. Engagement between Hospice UK and Health Secretary Wes Streeting MP was welcomed.

For the year to date, donation income is 50% above budget and continues its positive trend. Total income over the past 12 months has reached £2.2m, which is exceeding expectations. Some legacies were adjusted to reflect late notifications increasing last year's income by £300k, improving performance by £200k over the previous year. Retail reached a net contribution of £180k (22%), which is on target for the two-year plan. The lottery attrition reduced to 8%, with plans to expand this area of fundraising.

Overall, the hospice's financial position has improved over the past 12 months, with cash balances stable. Inflation of 4% has been factored into projections. NS emphasised that despite the financial success, staff capacity remains stretched.

4.2. Workforce and Operations: RT updated the Board on recent changes in staff, with several long-serving staff having left or retired. There have also been several new appointments in the Clinical Team. HR has managed payroll transitions following the unexpected departure of the colleague responsible for this area of work. NP and her team were commended for maintaining continuity. The office relocations continue, in preparation for lease exit and space reductions.

4.3. Clinical Update: The IPU is operating at full 10-bed capacity, which has been deemed sustainable. The Psychological support team has been reduced due to long-term sickness but supplemented with bereavement counsellors. The Social work team are managing complex cases, including child-fostering issues. Shift patterns have been reviewed to improve efficiency. The Hospice has been shortlisted for Volunteer Awards (Sutton EDI) and Hospice UK Volunteer Garden of the Year. The Board recorded their appreciation to all clinical and support teams. NM asked that thanks be passed on formally to all staff.

4.4. Communications and External Relations: The hospice will feature on BBC Newsnight (7 November 2025), and in an article in the Spectator on 24th October 2025. Applications have been submitted for the SW London Hospices to be the Times Christmas Charity.

4.5. Strategy: The Strategy document has been completed and positively received. It is now published online.

5. Finance Report

5.1. 2024/25 year-end position: NS advised that following the Auditor's report, there were some adjustments including legacy income, an overstatement correction of £35k, and write-off of relevant old IT systems. This caused the post-audit surplus to increase to £334k, inclusive of the £1m DOC gift. Total funds stand at £4.6m, with free reserves of £3.6m (and designated funds of £980k), equal to 4 months' operating expenditure, in line with the reserves policy.

5.2. 2024/25 external auditors report, annual report, and account inc. going concern: The Board noted that the new Auditors Crowe had been very engaged and thorough in their work. Their recommendations included stronger IT password controls, which was challenged by JG as these did not fit with the NHS and Microsoft guidelines, documentation of supplier due diligence, and periodic fraud-risk reviews. The Trustees accepted all recommendations, noting that relevant actions would be taken forward by the ELT.

Decision: The Board unanimously approved the 2024/25 audited accounts and Letter of Representation.

Action: NM to sign and NS to submit to the auditors.

6. Committee Update

6.1. 7th October HR Committee: PJ and NP updated the Board on HR activity - implementation of Heather Borthwick's audit recommendations is progressing well. The line-manager training programme will be initiated to enable improved autonomy reducing dependency on the HR team. The payroll review is underway with a business case to support future plans, and the new applicant-tracking system is implemented, improving recruitment efficiency and therefore the risk item removed from register. There is comprehensive pay-policy benchmarking scheduled for November 2025 and HR consultancy support is being sourced to support project-based aspects of work (e.g. policy development). The Board commended NP for tangible progress and positive cultural changes.

6.2. 17th October Clinical Quality & Governance Committee - The Board noted highlights presented by Carrie Chill, that Medical staffing is stable with morale improving. Outpatient clinics are operating fortnightly, reducing travel time, and there are no trends in complaints that arose since the last meeting that were identified with one particularly complex case resolved appropriately. Staff ratios are benchmarked against Hospice UK standards, and there is strengthened engagement with provider alliances through meetings led by RT and Katy Fisher. The Committee discussed plans for future Trustee scrutiny of policy approvals.

6.3. 14th October Income Generation & Communications Committee – Grahame Darnell updated on the meeting, confirming that income generation across all areas sits ahead of Q2 targets for the first time. Retail performance is slightly ahead of budget despite sector slow-down, Gift Aid is being optimised and lottery retention is strong. Ely's pop-up shop planning is ongoing, and overall team morale is positive and stable following changes. The Board noted excellent progress and reiterated appreciation for the teams' sustained performance.

6.4. 14th October Finance & Resources Committee – Alan Cogbill updated the Board on the key issues discussed including year-end accounts approved and auditor recommendations being implemented, and discussion on fraud risk exposure being added to the regular risk schedule. The Health & Safety review is implemented across retail sites and Hospice UK capital grant projects are progressing steadily.

7. Hospice Risk Register & summary of Departmental Risk Registers

The Board noted that the clinical workforce capacity risk has reduced to ten, following recent staff appointments, and greater collaboration with the Merton End of Life team, which has also helped to improve response times. Threats from cyber-attack and web downtime remain top risks, but there is mitigation in place. Pressure from inflation also continues with the current rate above the Bank of England targets.

8. AOB

8.1. Future meeting dates and times: It was noted that future HR Committees will commence at 10.30AM.

Decision: The Board AGREED the 2026 meeting dates, subject to GD's availability for the 28th January 2026 Board meeting.

Action: KM to circulate meeting invitations in the next two weeks.

8.2. Trustees Training: KM presented a governance paper on training for all Trustees, with a proposed programme over the coming year.

Decision: The Board AGREED to the proposed training programme.

Action: KM to provide a structured programme for the next Board meeting.

The main meeting closed at 15:46.

Signed:

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Date:

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