

Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Health and Care Professions Council held in public as follows:

Date: Thursday 26 March 2026

Time: 11am

Venue: Collaboration Space, HCPC Offices, Kennington

Present: Christine Elliott (Chair)
Grzegorz Drozd^{*}
Rebekah Eglinton
Helen Gough
Helen Grantham
John McEvoy
Lianne Patterson (via Microsoft Teams)
Catharine Seddon
David Stirling
Carl Stychin
Dabbi Taylor^{*}
Kathryn Thirlaway

Apologies: Pameleta Ricketts

In attendance:

Fatma Ali, Head of HR and OD
Claire Amor, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs
Francesca Bramley, Governance Manager
Alastair Bridges, Executive Director of Resources
Georgia Cross, Governance Officer
Laura Coffey, Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services
Claire Harman, Talent Acquisition Manager
Jamie Hunt, Head of Education
Alan Keshtmand, Head of Finance and Commercial
Patricia Morrissey, Head of Governance
Dave Munday, Lead Professional Officer (Regulation and Mental Health), Unite the Union
Matthew Peck, Head of Communications, Engagement and Public Affairs
Bernie O'Reilly, Chief Executive and Registrar

^{*} Council apprentice

Andrew Smith, Executive Director of Education, Registration and Regulatory
Standards and Deputy Chief Executive
Preethi Srinivasan, IT Service Desk Analyst
Kate Steele, Partner, Capsticks LLP
Steve Wright, Scrutiny Manager, Professional Standards Authority

Public meeting

1 Chair's welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting of Council, including a number of observers who were individually welcomed by the Chair. The Chair advised that the meeting would be recorded and an artificial intelligence (AI) tool was being piloted to support minute taking.

1(a) Apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Pameleta Ricketts.
- 1.2 The meeting was declared quorate.

1(b) Approval of agenda

- 1.3 The Council approved the agenda. It was agreed that item 7 (Chair of Council appointment process) would be moved to the private session of the meeting for the following reason:
 - (h) any other matter which, in the opinion of the Chair, is confidential or the public disclosure of which would prejudice the effective discharge of the Council's functions.

1(c) Declaration of members' interests in relation to agenda items

- 1.4 There were no interests to declare from Council members.

1(d) Minutes of the Council meeting on 12 February 2026

- 1.5 The Council approved the minutes as an accurate record of its meeting held in public on 12 February 2026, subject to correcting references to 'the Committee' in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 to 'the Council'.

1(e) Matters arising

- 1.6 The Council noted the update on the matters arising from previous meetings held in public.

2 Chair's Report

- 2.1 The Council noted the Chair's report.

Performance reports

3 Chief Executive's Performance Report

- 3.1 The Chief Executive's performance report highlighted key areas of organisational performance and key developments in the reporting period since the Council's last meeting in February 2026.
- 3.2 The Council noted the report and the following points:
- The Chief Executive updated the Council on developments arising from the Lord Mann Rapid Review into antisemitism and racism across the NHS and healthcare regulation. It was noted that initial government recommendations had been published through the GMC consultation on regulatory reform.
 - Progress continued on work to support registrants' understanding of scope of practice at enhanced, advanced and consultant levels. It was reiterated that this work did not constitute regulation of advanced practice. Engagement with professional bodies and registrants had been extensive and positively received.
 - A second continuing professional development (CPD) week had taken place from 2–6 March 2026, with significantly increased engagement compared to the previous year, including high attendance at webinars and increased website and social media engagement.
- 3.3 The Council discussed the complexity of the wider national and international context in which registrants and staff operated, including the rise in antisemitic and anti-Muslim hate crime. Awareness sessions on antisemitism and anti-Muslim hostility had been commissioned, to be delivered to the Senior Leadership Team in April 2026 and rolled out across the organisation. Updated online discrimination resources for registrants and learners were being finalised.
- 3.4 The Council discussed workforce pressures within the NHS, increasing levels of stress and burnout, and the potential implications for registrants, emphasising the importance of preventative and upstream regulatory approaches. The Chief Executive reflected that these pressures were likely to impact on fitness to practise concern volumes and CPD compliance.
- Action:** Further consideration of how the HCPC could respond to systemic workforce pressures within the NHS would be shared with the Council at a future meeting.
- 3.5 The Council noted that the GMC's regulatory reform consultation was expected to commence in spring 2026. It was confirmed that this would be a public consultation and that the Council would have the opportunity to consider and comment on the proposals, with flexibility as to whether this engagement took place through a Council discussion or correspondence.

- 3.6 In response to a query regarding how engagement with professional bodies and frontline practice informed education and training, the Executive Director of Education, Registration and Regulatory Standards clarified that intelligence gathered through professional body engagement fed into standards reviews and quality assurance activity, and that education providers were engaged both through formal standards review processes and ongoing quality assurance and monitoring arrangements.

4 Finance Report

- 4.1 The Council noted the finance report outlining the HCPC's financial performance as at the end of December 2025.
- 4.2 The Council noted the following points:
- The forecast year-end position had moved from a previously anticipated small deficit to a surplus, primarily due to timing differences in expenditure and identified savings.
 - Underspends were largely attributable to vacancies, lower-than-anticipated legal and partner costs, and favourable commercial arrangements.
 - Investment programme forecasts had been revised during the year to reflect updated delivery timelines and prioritisation, with expenditure expected to be phased across financial years where appropriate.
- 4.3 The Council discussed the relationship between financial underspends and organisational capacity, noting that while a surplus was positive from a financial perspective, it could also indicate operational pressures or constraints.
- 4.4 While reflecting that the HCPC was regarded as a good organisation to work for, the Council considered whether further steps could be taken to position the HCPC as an employer of choice, noting the recruitment challenges for some specialist roles. The Council discussed the potential benefits of earlier and more effective forecasting of hearings, including booking legal assessors further in advance where possible, particularly for review and lengthy hearings, and noted that current booking processes were largely manual. The Executive Director of Fitness to Practise and Tribunal Services confirmed that work had already begun to book hearings further in advance and had identified the opportunities to explore system-based solutions to support improved forecasting and booking.
- 4.5 The Council commended the Finance team for the quality of the report and their work in managing the organisation's financial position.

5 Corporate planning 2026-27

5(a) Corporate Plan 2026-27

- 5.1 The Executive Director of Corporate Affairs presented the corporate plan 2026-27, the first annual plan aligned to the HCPC's new corporate strategy.
- 5.2 The Council noted that the plan set out the priority areas of work for the year ahead and had been developed in parallel with the proposed budget. A deliverables tracker would be presented to the Council at its next meeting in May 2026. The plan did not reflect all organisational activity, with further detail contained within departmental workplans.
- 5.3 The Council emphasised the importance of clearly communicating to staff that the corporate plan highlighted priority areas rather than representing the full breadth of organisational activity.
- 5.4 The Council queried how equality, diversity and inclusion data across fitness to practise and registration processes reflected lived experience, and how this information could be accessed. In response, the Executive explained that analysis had been undertaken at key decision points to assess outcomes by protected characteristics, with no evidence to date of unfair decision-making, and that this work would continue as cases progressed through later stages and across Registration. The Council was advised that relevant data and analysis were available via the HCPC data hub, with further accessible reports and narrative explanations in development.
- 5.5 **Action:** The Executive Director of Education, Registration and Regulatory Standards would share the link to the HCPC data hub with Council members.
- 5.6 The Council approved the corporate plan 2026-27, subject to the following:
- considering rewording the sections relating to AI to emphasise the primacy of human decision-making and the HCPC's approach to AI governance;
 - making greater reference to ethical and equity considerations within the HCPC's use of technology;
 - placing greater emphasis on organisational resilience and sustainability in the context of ongoing external and system-wide pressures; and
 - acknowledging the preparatory work underway in anticipation of future legislative reform.

Action: The corporate plan would be updated to incorporate the Council's feedback prior to publication.

5(b) Budget 2026-27

- 5.7 The Executive Director of Resources presented the proposed budget for 2026–27, which had been recommended to the Council by the People and

Resources Committee. Remuneration elements of the budget had been reviewed by the Remuneration Committee as appropriate.

5.8 The Council noted the following points:

- the budget was balanced and aligned to the corporate plan;
- assumptions had been challenged to improve realism, particularly around recruitment, vacancy levels and hearings volumes, informed by detailed workforce planning and demand modelling.
- a 3% pay award and revised pay band structures had been incorporated following review by the Remuneration Committee.
- a prudent approach had been taken to income forecasting, including assumptions relating to international registration activity.
- capital investment plans reflected multi-year programmes, including sustainability and digital priorities;
- the approach to reserves reflected a balance between financial resilience and the need to maintain service delivery and capacity.

5.9 The Council discussed reserves, noting that while reserves remained compliant with the reserves policy, further consideration would be given to longer-term strategy following the fees review.

5.10 The Council approved the budget for 2026–27.

6 Update on Council effectiveness review 2025

6.1 The Council noted the update on progress against the Council effectiveness review action plan.

6.2 The review had highlighted a strong baseline of Council performance, with high scores in areas such as mutual respect, constructive challenge, and psychological safety. It had also identified opportunities to strengthen its approach to diversity, culture, and horizon scanning.

6.3 The Council noted that progress had been made across a number of themes, including participation, engagement, development opportunities and diversity. Nine of the 17 actions had been completed and the remaining actions were being progressed.

6.4 The Council discussed opportunities to strengthen learning from other boards and organisations, noting the value of both learning from external experience and sharing good practice arising from the Council's positive effectiveness review. The Council agreed that a future development session focused on pooling Council members' experience of other boards and exploring

opportunities for external engagement would be beneficial. Council member Helen Gough volunteered to lead this work.

Action: The Head of Governance would schedule a Council development session to consider learning from other boards, including non-executive networks.

- 6.5 The Council noted the outcomes of the annual effectiveness reviews for the Education and Training Committee and the People and Resources Committee, which continued to function effectively in accordance with the HCPC Code of Corporate Governance. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee planned to undertake its review in June 2026.

7 Chair of Council appointment process

- 7.1 This item would be discussed during the private session of the meeting.

8 Speaking up (whistleblowing) policy update

- 8.1 The Head of Governance presented an update on actions arising from previous review of the speaking up (whistleblowing) policy, including mandatory training and corporate membership of Protect, the UK's whistleblowing charity.
- 8.2 The Council noted the proposed changes to the policy to reflect forthcoming legislative changes recognising sexual harassment as a standalone protected disclosure.
- 8.3 The Council approved the proposed updates to the speaking up (whistleblowing) policy.

Items for noting

9 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held in public on 26 February 2026

- 9.1 The Council noted this item, including recent consideration of pay and remuneration matters, recommendations feeding into the 2026–27 budget, and ongoing work to improve alignment with the People and Resources Committee timetable.

10 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Education and Training Committee held in public on 4 March 2026

- 10.1 The Council noted this item, including a continued focus on education quality assurance process improvements, easing pressures from reduced international application volumes, the approval of refreshed education key performance indicators (KPIs) following the implementation of the new quality

assurance model, and positive progress on advanced practice and scope of practice work.

11 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee held in public on 11 March 2026

- 11.1 The Council noted this item, including the refresh of the strategic risk register aligned to the new corporate strategy and the positive assurance received from the National Audit Office following the interim audit.

12 Chair's report and draft minutes of the meeting of the People and Resources Committee held in public on 12 March 2026

- 12.1 The Council noted this item, including positive HR performance and staff engagement, consideration of gender and ethnicity pay gap data and targeted leadership development activity, and ongoing discussions to strengthen the Committee's effectiveness.

13 Council forward plan

- 13.1 The Council noted the forward plan.

14 Council reflection

- 14.1 Carl Stychin provided his reflections on the public session, noting the Council's ability to balance strategic ambition with caution in an uncertain external environment, the complexity of the regulatory context including issues of discrimination, freedom of expression and workforce pressures, and the importance of resilience and sustainability alongside continued organisational ambition.

15 Resolution

- 15.1 The Council resolved that the remainder of the meeting would be held in private, because the matters being discussed related to the following:
- (a) information relating to a registrant, former registrant or application for registration;
 - (b) information relating to an employee or office holder, former employee or office holder or applicant for any post or office;
 - (c) the terms of, or expenditure under, a tender or contract for the purchase or supply of goods or services or the acquisition or disposal of property;
 - (d) negotiations or consultation concerning labour relations between the Council and its employees;
 - (e) any issue relating to legal proceedings which are being contemplated or instituted by or against the Council;
 - (f) action being taken to prevent or detect crime or to prosecute offenders;

- (g) the source of information given to the Council in confidence; or
- (h) any other matter which, in the opinion of the Chair, is confidential or the public disclosure of which would prejudice the effective discharge of the Council's functions.

Item	Reason for Exclusion
16	H
17	H
18	H
19	H
20	H
21	G
22	H
23	H
24	H
25	G
26	H

The meeting adjourned at 12.30pm.

Chair:

Date: