Minutes

Meeting: 111th Council Meeting of the Patient and Client Council
Date and Time: Wednesday 8 July 2026
Venue/Online: Microsoft Teams (10.45am–1.00pm)

Council Members
Ms Ruth Sutherland (Chair)
Mr Stephen Mathews
Mr Alan Hanna
Ms Briege Arthurs
Mr Tom Irvine
Ms Emma O'Neill
Mr Cadogan Enright (Absent)
Mr Gary McMichael
Dr Julie Aiken
Ms Paula Bradley
Ms Rhoda Walker
Mr Tom Sullivan
Mr Philip Anderson
Ms Gael Gildernew

In attendance
Ms Meadhbha Monaghan, Chief Executive
Ms Una McKernan, Head of Operations
Mr Peter Hutchinson, Senior Policy, Impact and Influence Manager
Ms Katherine McElroy, Principal Practitioner
Ms Linda Craig, Regional Lead for Experience and Involvement Programmes, PHA

Apologies

Mr Paddy Farry; Ms Sarah Duffy; Ms Charlene Brooks

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed attendees and thanked members for attendance.

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

Minutes reviewed and approved.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were recorded.

4. CHAIR'S UPDATE

Ruth highlighted several governance priorities:

Board Assessment

- Members were thanked for completing the annual board assessment.
- Responses will inform the Council's development plan.
- Outstanding returns, particularly from newer members, were encouraged.

PCC Email Accounts

- Council members were reminded that use of personal email addresses presents a significant cybersecurity risk.
- PCC email accounts must be used exclusively from **1 August 2026**.
- Support remains available from Paula, Wesley and staff to help members access PCC systems.

Cybersecurity Training

- Completion rates for mandatory monthly cybersecurity training remain low.
- Members were urged to improve compliance, noting its importance for NHS governance and risk management.

Appraisals

- Council appraisals will commence shortly.
- Members are asked to complete self-assessment forms ahead of appraisal meetings.
- Ruth emphasised the need to ensure appraisals are completed on time following previous audit observations.

5. CEO UPDATE

Meadhbha provided an overview of significant activity since the May meeting, focusing on PCC's external influence and leadership profile.

International Fellowship

- Participating in a two-year Salzburg-based leadership fellowship examining healthy ageing across the UK, Germany and Switzerland.
- Working with international experts on systems leadership and health reform.

NHS Confederation Conference

- Presented PCC's **People to Partners** approach alongside Health Foundation researchers.
- Shared PCC learning on relational leadership and system reform.

Health Europe Conference

- Spoke at Europe's largest health innovation conference.
- Participated in discussions on patient trust, pharmaceutical engagement and healthcare transformation.
- Key message: successful health systems are those that adapt quickly, not necessarily those with the greatest resources.

Wider Influence

- Contributed to Public Sector Chairs' Forum discussions on public service transformation.
- Joined the advisory board of the **Patient Safety Commissioner for England**, strengthening PCC's representation at UK level.

Council Discussion

Members commended:

- The increased profile of PCC nationally and internationally.
- The value of investing in leadership development.
- The importance of capturing and sharing learning across the organisation.

The need to ensure sufficient organisational capacity and support for the CEO and staff.

6. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

Presented on behalf of ARAC by Tom Irvine in Paddy's absence.

Key Points

- PCC received an **unqualified audit opinion**.
- The organisation met its statutory financial duties and achieved a small surplus.
- Extensive work by Una McKernan and the team was acknowledged.

Decision

☑ Annual Report and Accounts approved.

A minor correction on Page 6 to Philip Anderson's surname was noted.

Tom Irvine left at this point.

7. REPORT TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE

- The Northern Ireland Audit Office provided a positive report.
- The only significant finding related to a small number of assets being capitalised below the £1,000 threshold.
- This was considered a low-level issue.

Decision

☑ **Report noted.**

8. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER 2026/27

Una presented the revised Corporate Risk Register.

Main Risks

1. **Cybersecurity**
    - Remains the highest risk.
    - Ongoing concerns about assurance and support arrangements with BSO/ITS.
2. **Financial Sustainability**
    - Continued monitoring of budgets and funding pressures.
3. **Demand versus Capacity** *(new risk)*
    - Reflects increasing workload across complaints, engagement and policy influence activities.
    - A capacity review is planned.
4. **Information Governance**
    - Successful implementation of the new case management system, **IRIS**.
5. **PCC Positioning and Influence**
    - Focus on PCC's role within the wider health and social care system and maximising policy impact.

Discussion

- Strong support was expressed for inclusion of the demand-and-capacity risk.
- Members requested greater focus on:
    - Staff wellbeing and organisational culture.
    - How PCC evidence and data are used across the wider system.
    - Monitoring pressures on staff and organisational resilience.

Decision

☑ Corporate Risk Register approved**.**

9. APPOINTMENT AND REMUMERATION COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

- Terms of reference were reviewed and updated.
- Tom Irvine suggested increasing membership from three members to improve resilience and governance.

Decision

☑ Terms of Reference approved.

- An additional member will be sought for the committee.

10. REGISTER OF COUNCIL INTERESTS

- Members were reminded to return any outstanding declarations.

Decision

☑ Register noted.

11. POLICY AND INFLUENCE COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

- The former Policy and Influence Working Group is now becoming a formal Council committee.
- Paula Bradley highlighted the committee's readiness to begin its work programme.

Decision

☑ Terms of Reference approved.

12. PCC REVISED COMPLAINTS POLICY

Presented by Alan Hanna.

Key Changes

- Alignment with the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman's model complaints procedure.
- Reduction in Stage 1 response times.
- Removal of the previous "early resolution" stage.

Discussion

- Members expressed concern that removal of informal resolution could discourage early dialogue and relationship-building.
- It was acknowledged that PCC must comply with NIPSO requirements but may revisit the issue if system-wide concerns emerge.

Decision

☑ Revised Complaints Policy approved.

Emma O'Neill left at this point.

13. PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND VCS

Presented by Meadhbha Monaghan

Discussion

- The agreement aligns closely with PCC's values and its "People as Partners" approach.
- Briege Arthurs noted ongoing concerns within the voluntary and community sector regarding funding, contracts and workforce sustainability despite positive strategic commitments to fair funding principles.

Decision

☑ Partnership Agreement adopted.

14. PCC FINANCE MEMO MONTH 2 SUMMARY

Una McKernan provided a financial update.

Key Points

- Initial projected deficit of approximately £98,000 has reduced significantly.
- Month 2 position showed a projected deficit of around £47,000, with expectations of further improvement.
- Savings were achieved through vacancy management and organisational restructuring.

Decision

☑ Finance report noted.

15. ARAC MINUTES AND PAPERS FOR NOTING

Tom Irvine presented these earlier in the agenda after Item 9 as he had to leave.

- Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee papers and minutes were received and noted.
- Members acknowledged the significant work undertaken by ARAC and supporting staff.

Decision

☑ Reports noted.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- No additional business raised.

17. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- Next Council Meeting: **Wednesday 23rd September 2026**
- Workshop: **Wednesday 18th November 2026**

Key Actions Agreed

- Members to complete outstanding Board Assessment returns.
- Members to submit outstanding Declarations of Interest.
- Transition fully to PCC email accounts by **1 August 2026**.
- Improve compliance with mandatory cybersecurity training.
- Complete annual appraisals within required timescales.
- Further develop measures on organisational culture and staff wellbeing within governance reporting.
- Recruit an additional member to the Appointment and Remuneration Committee.