

SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST
Minutes of a meeting of the Charitable Funds Committee
held on Friday 30 January 2026 at 11.30am
in the Meeting Room, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital, Dundonald

PRESENT: Ms S McCauley, Non-Executive Director (Chair)

Mr N McKinley, Non-Executive Director
Prof S Kirk, Medical Director
Prof D Robinson, Deputy Chief Executive, Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery & AHPs and Director of Support Services
Ms W Thompson, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Contracts & Estates

IN

ATTENDANCE: Mr J Patton, Chair of Trust Board (observer)
Ms R Devlin, Assistant Director, Nursing Workforce, Education & Development
Ms L Benson, Head of Financial Accounts & Governance
Mr S Martin, Board Assurance Manager, Trust HQ (minutes)

OPENING REMARKS

Ms McCauley welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a special welcome to both Professor Stephen Kirk attending his first Charitable Funds Committee meeting as a Member in his new role as Medical Director as well as Mr Jonathan Patton, Chair of Trust Board, who was attending all Board Committees at the beginning of this calendar year as an observer.

1.0 APOLOGIES

Mrs McNally (Board Secretary).

2.0 DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None declared.

3.0 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2025

Approved without further amendment.

4.0 MATTERS ARISING

Noted (**SET/CF/01/26**). **Ms McCauley** proposed a standard template be produced to ensure consistency and save staff time by focusing on the relevant strategy priority. Following discussion, Members agreed progress updates should be by way of a standard template. **Ms McCauley** asked for those progress updates currently pending to be re-tabled at either the next meeting or circulated by email. **Ms McCauley** also suggested a Trust Board paper be prepared with updates on sponsored projects. **Ms Thompson**

suggested the Committee's Annual Report might be an appropriate vehicle to demonstrate outputs. **Ms McCauley** had no concerns with the Annual Charitable Funds Report as it was aligned with CCNI/DoF requirements or the Committee's Annual Report with its purpose being to provide assurance on how the Committee discharged its remit adding its format should align with other Committees as the 2024/25 Report had been different in presentation.

Following discussion, Members agreed this should take the form of an annual Progress Report to Trust Board and that the Finance team should review what changes might be made to the Annual Charitable Funds Report to clearly demonstrating to the public the benefits derived from their donations.

5.0 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

5.1 FINANCIAL REPORT AS OF 31 DECEMBER 2025

Members reviewed the tabled Financial Report (**SET/CF/02/26**) with **Ms Benson** advising £895k had been expended to date consisting of £813k against Charitable Funds and £82k against DoH funding received. **Ms Benson** stated £2,042k had been committed for 2025/26 (subject to approvals) and £1,944k committed until the end of 2027/28. Members noted details of total committed spend including approved pilots/projects of spend more than £50k. **Ms Benson** noted there were 62 funds (down from 76 funds since the previous meeting) with balances of £3,284k inclusive of commitments (down from £4,767k). **Ms Benson** stated 39 of the 62 funds had a balance greater than £10k totalling £ 3,202k with 23 have a balance less than £10k representing £82k. **Ms Benson** then referred to Section 5 (Common Investment Fund) outlining the Charitable Fund bank account balance therein was £682k.

Ms Benson highlighted Section 6 (DoH Donation) and explained Table 5 outlining support for nursing staff: opening balance, in-year expenditure & remaining balance of £352k noting commitments made to support Open University nursing students (£350k), the UHD shuttle bus initiative (£44k), the Staff Psychological Service (£78k in 2025/26 & £63k in 2026/27). **Ms Benson** referred to Table 6 outlining support for general staff: opening balance, in-year expenditure & remaining balance of £831k noting commitments to the Staff Psychological Service (£158k in 2025/26 & £126k in 2026/27), the UHD shuttle bus initiative (£88k) and an Ards Hospital landscaping project (£100k in 2026/27).

Ms McCauley welcomed the financial breakdowns and asked why more than 50% of the 2025/26 spending was being issued in Q4 with **Ms Benson** stating this was due to invoice timing with a project often well progressed but there being a lag in monies being moved or an invoice received. **Ms McCauley** sought confirmation Members were not being asked to agree the paper and **Ms Thompson** noted it was for discussion. **Ms McCauley** noted significant spend not visible to Members because of proposals falling below a set value threshold and **Ms Thompson** replied the Financial Report accounted for overall spend. **Ms McCauley**

stated it would be useful to review the Trust's policy for Charitable Funds spend not authorised by the Committee which **Ms Benson** agreed to circulate. **Mr McKinley** referred to Table 4 and asked what impact was being achieved through Fund SET10 ICU Services Superfund before also asking if the relationship between this fund and designated funds might inadvertently impact ICU. **Ms Benson** stated there would be no impact as monies would go into the separate ICU fund.

6.0 ITEMS FOR DECISION

6.1 NEW PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION

OPEN UNIVERSITY (OU) STUDENTS: PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT USING CHARITABLE FUNDS

Ms McCauley invited Ms Roisin Delvin to present on the tabled proposal (**SET/CF/03/26**). **Ms Devlin** explained that, over the last number of years, SET had supported a number of staff to gain their nursing registration through a 4 year OU programme. **Ms Devlin** advised applications were open to a wide range of staff from support services, clerical and nursing assistants. **Ms Devlin** stated the programme had been extremely successful to date with a low attrition rate with 115 staff members having completed the course as of 31 October 2025 – many of whom have went on to be promoted.

Ms Devlin explained that, while DoH provides £4541 per year to facilitate backfilling with bank staff, this resulted in a deficit of funding given students are only available for 45% of their time to fulfil their substantive roles. **Ms Devlin** stated the proposal sought support to cover 2025/26 cohort costs equating to £279k. **Ms Devlin** added the proposal also included the appointment of a temporary full-time Band 7 nurse for 1 year to support OU students and processes bringing the value to £350,408. **Professor Robinson** stated there was recognition SET may not be able to sustain the current level of support and consideration will be given to regional conversations around training including courses provided by other further education providers.

Mr McKinley asked what was the rationale for only a 1 year temporary Band 7 nurse to support students asked given this is a rolling programme and why would SET not consider this as a natural part of the overall business model. **Ms Devlin** replied the team were realistic about the Committee's competing priorities adding a 1 year period would allow them to test the role's effectiveness. **Ms Devlin** stated the proposal did not include a request to backfill staff in their second, third and fourth years and was limited to new-starts. **Mr McKinley** highlighted the Psychology Support in Maternity Services proposal as an objective benchmark where the request was for 3 years and suggested there was merit in seeking support for 2 years.

Ms McCauley sought assurance that, while Charitable Funds could not ordinarily be used for staff substitution, this was allowable given this funding was from the DoH donation. **Ms Thompson** replied it was not permitted for anything that should be publicly funded to provide health and social care. **Ms Thompson** stated a scheme facilitating staff to train was not a core function for public funds adding the DoH donation was made in the context of the pandemic under a one-off Ministerial direction with the proposal therefore meeting the relevant criteria.

Following discussion, Members approved the proposal as tabled.

ULSTER HOSPITAL STAFF SHUTTLE BUS TO OFFSITE PARKING

Members received, for decision, a tabled paper (**SET/CF/04/26**) and **Professor Robinson** provided an overview seeking support to pay for the lease of 100 off-site car parking spaces and run a shuttle bus service to operate Monday to Friday 6.45am to 9.20pm by accessing Funds SET04 DoH Support Nursing Staff (circa £44k) and SET05 DoH Support General Staff (circa £88k) equating a total of £132,400.

Mr McKinley welcomed the detail in respect of reducing carbon footprint and how the proposal fitted within the sustainability agenda. **Ms McCauley** asked if this request covered the existing service rather than an additional one and **Professor Robinson** confirmed this is for the existing service somewhat enhanced on the current arrangements. **Professor Robinson** added the proposal was being made in the context of an ongoing process to revise UHD staff car parking arrangements and this would assist the transition for those impacted by forthcoming changes. **Ms McCauley** stated she was supportive on the basis this was subject to review and there being no expectation beyond Year 1 given the broader issue of car parking is outwith the Committee's remit. **Professor Robinson** agreed a 12 month review would be adequate.

Following discussion, Members approved the proposal as tabled.

STAFF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE (SPS) 2025/26

Members reviewed, for decision, a tabled Application Form (**SET/CF/05/26**) and Business Case (**SET/CF/06/26**) with **Ms Benson** providing a summary of the support sought totalling £236k for the service in 2025/26 to be drawn from Funds SET04 DoH Support Nursing Staff (circa £79k) and SET05 DoH Support General Staff (circa £157k).

Mr McKinley sought clarification on the whole time equivalent (WTE) figures and **Ms Benson** explained the costings before acknowledging a discrepancy listed on the cover page. **Ms McCauley** sought assurance on its retrospective nature and the need to ensure the proposal aligned the staffing model. **Ms Benson** provided details on work undertaken to date with **Professor Kirk** outlined tangible benefits of the service. **Ms McCauley** requested additional detail to ensure the Committee could

decide upon retrospective spend adding she was in agreement in principle but there was a risk of inadvertently creating a precedent.

Mr McKinley asked whether there was merit in not ruling out the possibility of funding 3 rather than 2 years and agreed Members should not be retrospectively approving requests. **Ms Thompson** stated consideration was needed on any recurrent funding run-ons if timeframes were extended adding the requested spend was allowable. **Ms McCauley** then obtained approval subject to the aforementioned revisions and to confirmation retrospective spend is permissible. Members also agreed proposals seeking retrospective spend would not be taken forward until the basis for doing so had been confirmed.

STAFF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE (SPS) 2026/27

Members received, for decision, a tabled Application Form (**SET/CF/07/26**) and Business Case (**SET/CF/08/26**) with **Ms Benson** summarised requested support totalling £188,786 in 2026/27 drawn from Funds SET04 DoH Support Nursing Staff (circa £63k) and SET05 DoH Support General Staff (circa £126k). Following discussion, **Ms McCauley** sought and obtained approval for the proposal as tabled.

REMOVAL OF DESIGNATION

Members reviewed a tabled paper on the designation of named Funds (**SET/CF/09/26**) with **Ms Benson** outlining that, in order to comply with CCNI registration, SET had undertaken a review to manage Charitable Funds in the most effective way possible. **Ms Benson** stated this had resulted in the establishment of 11 'Super Funds' to enhance flexibility of use going forward but noting there were a number of specific purpose funds with no legal mechanism to merge them.

Ms Benson explained SET must apply to the High Court to approve the proposed new funds structure which involved seeking a direction on dealing with any restricted funds by way of a cy-pres application. **Ms Benson** stated Counsel had classed 5 named Funds as 'designated' meaning they are a type of restricted fund from which monies can only be legally spent on the charitable purpose for which they were earmarked. **Ms Benson** recommended Members agree the designation status of the following funds should be removed:

<u>Fund Name</u>	<u>Fund Number</u>
UHD ICU Nurses Education & Travel Fund	04U47
UHD Urology Fund	01U26
UHD General Surgery	01U37
Florence Henry Estate	00041
Robert Moorehead Bequest	00042

Ms McCauley asked if Trust Board needed to be notified of any decision to removal designation. **Ms Benson** replied Counsel had

asked the same query and indicated they were content with agreement by this Committee having reviewed all relevant documentation. Following discussion, **Ms McCauley** sought and obtained approval for the removal of designation for the aforementioned Funds on the basis the original purpose of each was no longer aligned with the current strategic needs of the Trust. **Ms McCauley** added a copy approved minute from this meeting be forwarded to Counsel once available.

6.2 COMMITTEE PROGRAMME OF WORK (PoW) 2026/27

Members discussed the draft PoW (**SET/CF/10/26**) with **Mr McKinley** referring to a Trust Board progress report to demonstrate stories behind each project noting it could take the form of a short video and suggesting a look-back reflection prompt be included. **Ms McCauley** sought and obtained approval with narrative included to reflect the intention to develop a Trust Board progress report during 2026/27.

7.0 ITEMS FOR NOTING

7.1 COMMON INVESTMENT FUND (CIF) UPDATE

Ms Thompson provided a verbal update noting both she and Ms McCauley had attended the latest CIF meeting from which it was anticipated its Annual Accounts would be available for approval at the next CIF meeting. **Ms McCauley** asked if there was merit in bringing an Annual Report on the CIF Accounts to this Committee and **Ms Thompson** agreed to arrange for this for the September 2026 meeting.

7.2 INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS IMPACTING CHARITABLE FUNDS

Members noted a brief verbal update from **Ms Benson**.

7.3 COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE 2026/27

Noted (**SET/CF/11/26**).

8.0 ITEMS FOR ESCALATION TO TRUST BOARD

There were no items for escalation.

9.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ms McCauley asked for early visibility of the draft Committee Annual Report.

10.0 DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

Ms McCauley advised the next meeting would be on Wednesday 17 June 2026 at 11.30am in the Boardroom, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital before thanking everyone for their participation and closing proceedings at 1.01pm.