



**NORFOLK
AUTISM
PARTNERSHIP**

Minutes of the Norfolk All Age Autism Partnership Board (NAPB)

Held on: Tuesday 30th September 2025 13:00 -15:00

Venue: Microsoft Teams

Please note: These notes represent an overview summary of this meeting rather than a verbatim transcript.

Members of the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board

Attendee	Role	Organisation	Attended	Apologises	No response
Adrian Grant	Co-Chair	NAP	✓	-	-
Anna Haig	Police Engagement	Norfolk Constabulary	✓	-	-
Andy Hudson	Head of Personalisation, Quality of Care for LD and Autism	ICB	✓	-	-
Caroline Williams		Healthwatch Norfolk	✓	-	-
Caron Ager	Learning Disabilities and Autism Programme Senior Manager	ICB	✓	-	-
Cathrine Hankin	Policy, Research and Equalities Officer	Norfolk Constabulary	✓	-	-
Catherine Haig	Clinical Lead	Autism Service Norfolk	-	-	✓
Claire Jones	Local Offer Manager	Norfolk County Council	-	-	✓
Holly Purchase	Autistic Person		-	-	✓
Joanna Smith	Consultant Clinical Psychologist/Clinical Lead (Autism Intensive Support)	Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust	✓	-	-
Joseph Jarvis	Autistic Person		✓	-	-
Joseph Royal	Neurodiversity Support Manager	HMP Norwich	✓	-	-
Karen Dures	Autism Strategic Business Lead	Norfolk County Council	✓	-	-
Lee Gibbons	Partnership Board Co-ordinator	NAP	✓	-	-
Lucy Adcock	Business Support	ASD Helping Hands	✓	-	-
Maria Karretti	Clinical Steward for Autism and Learning disabilities	ICB	-	✓	-
Mark Knights	Parent/Carer	Family Voice Norfolk	✓	-	-
Richard Peat	Careers Adviser		-	-	✓
Sharon Brooks		Carers Voice	✓	-	-
Stephen Durrance	Autistic Person		✓	-	-

Susan Capps-Jenner	Autistic Person		✓	-	-
Tracey Walton	Autism Commissioning Manager	Norfolk County Council	✓	-	-
Trevor Key	Parent/Carer	NAP	-	✓	-
Viv Donaldson	Operational Service Lead LD CAMHS & NDD Services	NCHC	-	-	✓

Presenter	Organisation and Role	Agenda Item	Agenda Title
Gemma Hall - Sent apologies	ASD Helping Hands	5	Young People Autism Advisory Group (YPAAG) Update
Paul Longe	Lead Psychologist, Husband to an Autistic Person	8	Intensive Support Service: Study Update

Guest	Organisation and Role
Jessica Roberts	Autistic Person – Sent apologies
Tracey Daws	Autistic Person
Jade Saint-Laurent	Autistic Person
Lisa Franks	Parent/Carer

Action Log

Date Added	Action	Due by	Owner	Date Completed
	For the Diagnosis Working group & the NAPB to discuss how they wish to have diagnostic data presented from the 1st June	Closed	Diagnosis Working Group	Initial Meeting held on the 24th September
	Finish first draft of TOR for both Diagnosis Working Group and Support Pathways Working Group, bring back to Board for sign off	Ongoing	Lee Gibbons	Currently recruiting for these groups
	Find a Autism Group Lead for the Support Pathways Working Group	Ongoing	Lee Gibbons	Currently recruiting for these groups
	Schedule follow up for Autism Intensive support service	Ongoing	Lee Gibbons	Agenda item for this meeting
	For the NAPB Steering group to discuss routes of escalation	Closed	NAPB Steering Group	The group have agreed to task the NASOG with any escalation related to the strategy, but will escalate any concerns that arise that are not managed through the NASOG

	To begin to recruit new members for the NAPB and associated working group	Closed	Lee Gibbons	Agenda Item
	To send a Thank you letter to L Edwards thanking them for their time and participation in the NAPB	Closed	Lee Gibbons	Letter sent on 1 st September 2025

Meeting Minutes

Agenda Item	Pre-Meeting Support	Action and Due Date
	15 minutes was given to pre meeting support for those who required it.	

Agenda Item	Welcome, Introduction & Approval of minutes and action log	Action and Due Date
1.1	Welcome and introductions made. Communication prompts posted to the Teams Chat window, and their use explained. No reasonable adjustments were requested. Members reported no declaration of interest. Minutes and action log approved by the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board (NAPB) Code of Conduct to be monitored by Lee Gibbons	
1.2	Members were notified that an automatic transcript of the meeting would take place to ensure accuracy of minutes. There were no objections	

Agenda Item	Diagnostic Working Group Update	Action and Due Date
2.1	Service Transition	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• From 1st June 2025, Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care Board (ICB) took over commissioning of the Adult Autism Diagnostic Services from Norfolk County Council.• Current provider is ABL Health<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Service name: Be U Norfolk○ Service model: Adult Autism Assessment and Navigation Service <p>Navigation Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers up to 12 weeks of goal-based support to individuals on the waiting list.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Flexible use: support can be split before and after the assessment.• 1275 individuals transferred from the previous provider.• 50 of those referrals were awaiting triage• Navigation offer sent to all 1275; only 17 accepted initially – likely due to lack of awareness. <p>As of 14th August 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 20 new referrals received via GPs since transfer on 1st June 2025• 12 people discharged from the service• 17 assessments completed.• 22 navigation sessions delivered to date.• Total waiting for assessment: 1208<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Longest current wait on the list: 2–3 years○ Estimated wait for new referrals: 5+ years	
2.2	<p>Data Template for Reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Template includes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Total number of people awaiting assessment	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of People transferred from previous provider ○ New referrals ○ Number of assessments completed ○ Number of navigation sessions ○ Assessment outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Initial data shows most referrals result in a positive autism diagnosis. ● Separate section for Right to Choose (based on invoices). ● Developing section for Children and Young People’s data — currently incomplete due to data access issues. 	
2.3	<p>Question: Is there a cap on the amount of money available for Right to Choose assessments?</p> <p>Answer: There is no cap or dedicated budget for Right to Choose assessments—The ICB must pay all valid invoices.</p>	
2.4	<p>Question: Can you explain what the navigation sessions are, and why there may have been low initial uptake?</p> <p>Answer: Navigation sessions offer support while waiting for assessment, but uptake was low due to lack of awareness; now all referrals post-1st June are automatically included without affecting assessment rights.</p>	
2.5	<p>Question: Is there a plan or timescale in place for addressing the waiting list?</p> <p>Answer: Yes, but while the provider can meet current demand, a large backlog and the transition of young people into adult services—is significantly impacting wait times</p>	
2.6	<p>Question: How is ABL Health prioritising people on the autism assessment waiting list?</p>	

	<p>Answer: Referrals are handled in order, but urgent cases can be prioritised based on risk. During the co-production of the service some autistic people said that they would be happy to offer their place to someone in crisis or needed an urgent appointment.</p>	
2.7	<p>Question: What is the minimum number of assessments per year? Answer: About 240 per year, around 20 per month.</p>	
2.8	<p>Question: What support is available after diagnosis? Answer: We offer a 12-week navigation service split between pre- and post-diagnostic support and are improving crisis and mental health services for autistic people.</p>	
2.9	<p>Question: Can people diagnosed years ago get support now? Answer: Support depends on individual needs. We provide signposting and are expanding crisis support</p>	
2.10	<p>Question: How do people find available services after diagnosis? Answer: The Norfolk Autism Partnership Board website is the recommended starting point.</p>	
2.11	<p>Question: Are post-diagnostic tools from the previous provider still available? Answer: We're checking availability and considering making those tools accessible again.</p>	<p>Action: LG to investigate the availability of post-diagnostic tools previously hosted by the former provider. To meet with ABL Health and CA, TW to explore hosting these tools on the Norfolk Autism Partnership Board website.</p>

Agenda Item	Autism Support Pathways Working Group Update	Action and Due Date
3.1	<p>Autism Support Pathways Groups – Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and share information about support and services. • Help improve services for autistic people. • Encourage a wide range of support and services to add and manage their information on the Norfolk Autism Directory. • Create a Norfolk Autism Quality Mark to identify services offering high-quality, accessible support. 	
3.2	<p>Updates Since Last NAPB Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 new applications received (not currently involved with NAPB): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 3 autistic people ○ 1 parent/carer ○ 2 professionals (both withdrew applications) <p>Call for Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still seeking at least 1 more autistic people to join the group. • Interested board members can email: adultautism@norfolk.gov.uk 	
3.3	<p>Question: Is it just for professionals to join, or can more autistic people still join?</p> <p>Answer: We have space for one more autistic person or parent/carer to join this group.</p> <p>SCJ would like to join the group</p>	

Agenda Item	NAPB Recruitment	Action and Due Date
4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment Drive Launched <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Began after the last board meeting. ○ Aim: To recruit more autistic people and parent/carers to the board. 	



	<p>Current Board Representation (Total: 25 Members)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autistic People – 4 • Parent/Carers – 4 • ICB (Integrated Care Board) – 3 • Justice – 4 • NCC (Education) – 2 • NCC (Children’s Services) – 1 • NCC (Adult Services) – 2 • Primary & Community Health (Children & Young People) – 1 • Secondary Mental Health Care – 1 • VCSE (Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise) – 3 	
4.2	<p>NAPB Applicant Update (Since Last Meeting)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total Applicants: 11 individuals <p>Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 – Applications withdrawn • 6 – Invited as guests to a meeting / placed on working group waiting list • 2 – Awaiting response from applicants 	
4.3	<p>Question: Is there a limit on the number of autistic board members?</p> <p>Answer: There’s no fixed limit, but the group’s overall balance is considered, and other involvement opportunities are available if a board role isn’t possible.</p>	
Agenda Item	Young People Autism Advisory Group (YPAAG) Update	Action and Due Date
5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YPAAG Overview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Group of autistic young people aged 11–18. ○ Provides direct input from young people to the board. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Group meets every two months.○ Each session focuses on a priority from the autism strategy:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strategy is explained in accessible language.▪ Young people give feedback in their own words. <p>Recent Feedback (Topic: Priority 2 of the Norfolk All Age Strategy: Improve access to education and support transitions into adulthood)</p> <p>1. Lack of Support in Overcrowded Classrooms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A student from a small village school said:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ "Schools are oversubscribed, so I don't get the help I need."▪ Teaching assistants are often too busy with other students. <p>2. Homework Overload:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Students feel overwhelmed by homework.○ Preference for no homework.○ Highlighted difficulty separating school and home tasks — "schoolwork is school, home is home." <p>3. Choice of Trusted Adult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Students prefer to choose their own trusted teacher, rather than being assigned one.○ They want to speak to someone they feel comfortable with.	
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	<p>4. Improved School Transitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ One student only had one transition day before starting secondary school.○ They spent the whole day with their form tutor.○ Found meeting subject teachers for the first time in lessons overwhelming.○ Would prefer more transition time and to meet all teachers in advance. <p>5. Autism Awareness Among Peers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Suggestion to teach all students about autism, possibly through a course. <p>6. Work Experience Concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Worry about not getting a placement that matches interests.○ Want work experience to be meaningful and relevant. <p>7. Uncertainty About the Future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A Year 11 student said, "I don't know what's next for me after school."○ Lacked information on options like college, apprenticeships, or work.○ Felt unaware of available support. <p>Next Steps:</p>	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback will likely be forwarded to the team working on the new education strategy. <p>Engagement with Professionals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> YPAAG members are open to professional involvement, but only virtually – not in person. 	
5.2	<p>Question: Who is the facilitator of this group?</p> <p>Answer: Gemma Hall, ASD Helping Hands</p>	

Agenda Item	Break	Action and Due Date
6.1	A ten-minute break was held	

Agenda Item	Strategy Oversight Working Group Update	Action and Due Date
7.1	<p>Update Following Last Board Meeting The Norfolk Autism Strategy Oversight Group met on 8 September to discuss the Year One Plan Progress Update for July 2025.</p> <p>Key Actions Taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed BRAG ratings Identified and updated unclear wording Agreed actions that have not progressed as expected to share with the Board Agreed actions that have progressed well to share with the Board Agreed changes to the NASOG Terms of Reference <p>The NAPB is asked to approve the updated NASOG Terms of Reference</p> <p>The Board approved the Terms of Reference</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">7.2</p>	<p>Year One Plan – Progress and Concerns</p> <p>Areas of Good Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Services delivered Autism Education Trust training to 298 educational settings, along with other autism training courses. • NAPB challenged the Care Quality Commission on their co-production approach during Norfolk County Council’s Adult Social Services inspection. • NAPB established the Young People Autism Advisory Group (YPAAG), providing feedback on Priority One and planning discussions on remaining priorities. <p>Areas of Concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress has not been made as expected on several actions from the Local Area Improvement Plan (LAIP). • It is understood that some of the actions at the time of sharing were still in development that has since lead to some changes 	
<p style="text-align: center;">7.3</p>	<p>Creating the ‘You Said, We Did’ and Year Two Plan Norfolk Autism Strategy Oversight Group (NASOG) is now working to co-produce</p> <p>‘You Said, We Did’ Document (Year One)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share completed actions and improvements made during Year One. • To be presented to NAPB on 25 November 2025 • Will be available on the NAPB website. <p>Year Two Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NASOG will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reword actions into plain English and ask organisations to review. ○ Review draft Year Two Plan at October NASOG meeting. ○ Seek approval of the Year Two Plan through wider governance routes. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Present draft Year Two Plan to NAPB on 25 November 2025. • The Year Two Plan will be published on the NAPB website after approval by all partners and the NAPB. 	
7.4	<p>Next Steps</p> <p>Autism Strategy Oversight Group</p> <p>When: Tuesday 7 October 2 pm to 4 pm Who: All members of this group</p> <p>What: Members are asked to co-produce the You Said, We Did document.</p> <p>Autism Strategy Oversight Group</p> <p>When: Monday 3 November 2 pm to 4 pm Who: All members of this group</p> <p>What: Members are asked to finish co-producing the Year Two Plan</p> <p>Norfolk Autism Partnership Board</p> <p>When: Tuesday 25 November Who: All members of the partnership board</p> <p>What: Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agree in principle the draft Year Two Plan ○ Sign off the ‘You Said, We Did’ document 	

Agenda Item	Intensive Support Service: Study Update	Action and Due Date
8.1	<p>Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JS provided an introduction and recap of the Autism Intensive Support Team Introduction. 	<p>Action: LG to contact JS to arrange a further item on the Autism intensive support service</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full presentation took place on 27th May 2025. • To view the notes from this meeting, please click the following link: Norfolk Autism Partnership Board — 27 May 2025 - Norfolk Autism Partnership 	
8.2	<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Husband to a late-diagnosed autistic partner. • Personal experience: His wife received an autism diagnosis after 10 years together 	
8.3	<p>Background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clinicians across Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) expressed ongoing uncertainty, frustration, and concern about how best to support autistic adults. • This was a shared theme across disciplines, teams and services. • 2024 caseload audits show approx. 15% of service users across City and North CMHTs had a diagnosis or traits of autism. <p>Aim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of staff working with autistic adults in complex mental health settings. • To use findings to inform future service development. 	
8.4	<p>What Have We Learnt From The Data?</p> <p>1. Diagnosis and Recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long waiting times for autism assessments. • Uncertainty about recognising autistic traits while working with service users. • The impact of diagnostic overshadowing. <p><i>“It takes over a year and it’s a nightmare.”</i></p> <p>2. Service Design and Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services often not designed with autistic people in mind. 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems felt rigid, overstretched, and unclear in remit. <i>“We’re trying to stick square pegs in round holes.”</i> <p>3. Post-Diagnostic Support and Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even when autism was recognised, staff struggled to find appropriate resources or support to offer. <i>“She was diagnosed with autism...There was no support afterwards. They just said, ‘see you later’.”</i> <p>4. Managing Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitions and crises often led to increased distress. • Standard risk strategies not always effective. <i>“They don’t want to have multiple people contacting or visiting them.”</i> <p>5. Personal Perceptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff felt unsure, overwhelmed, and sometimes isolated in their work with autistic adults. <i>“It’s uncomfortable territory for everyone.”</i> <p>6. Putting Theory into Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even when training was available, staff struggled to apply it in real-world settings. <i>“You would only grow your understanding on it if you were lucky enough to come across it in placements.”</i> <p>7. Working Together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multidisciplinary teams were sometimes a source of support—but also of inconsistency and conflict. <i>“It’s just luck whether it’s someone who understands autism.”</i> 	
8.5	What Does the Data Suggest for Service Improvement Recommendations?	



Recommendation 1: Develop a Trust-Wide Autism Training Strategy

- Strengthen staff skills and confidence in supporting autistic adults.
- Training to include:
 - Differentiating autism from other conditions
 - Offer training on evidence-based methods for adapting treatments specifically for autistic adults.
 - Practical, co-produced, CMHT-specific training
 - Managing transitions and crisis in an autism-informed way

Recommendation 2: Clear Guidelines for Addressing Autism as Co-occurring

- Autism to be recognised as integral to service users' mental health.
- Implementation examples:
 - Include autism in routine MDT discussions and care plans
 - Embed autism-informed thinking in team culture and supervision
 - Clarify inclusion criteria to avoid exclusion based on autism
 - Engage with commissioners to improve joined-up services

Recommendation 3: Collaborate with ICB and other Local Authorities

- Address needs of autistic adults with complex mental health conditions.
- Focus areas:
 - Faster identification and diagnosis
 - Design and delivery of post-diagnostic support
 - Map existing services to identify gaps
 - Strengthen links between diagnosis and treatment services

Recommendation 4: Support Autism-Focused Research

- Develop deeper understanding of autistic service users' experiences.
- Implementation examples:
 - Partner with universities and research bodies
 - Prioritise co-produced research with experts by experience
 - Create learning opportunities through case studies and workshops



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Introduce autism-specific outcome measures <p>Recommendation 5: Autism Screening at Initial Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate autism screening into early stages of care.• Implementation:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Use brief tools (e.g. AQ-10) if neurodivergence is suspected○ Train staff to identify and interpret screening results○ Enable confident signposting to diagnostic services <p>Recommendation 6: Improve EPR Systems for Autism Visibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key autism-related information to be clearly displayed in records.• Suggestions:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Create flags for autism, adjustments, and communication preferences○ Use alerts/pop-ups to highlight key care needs○ Audit data quality and monitor system use in pilot stages <p>Recommendation 7: Evidence-Based Treatment Adaptation Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide guidance on:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Communication, pacing, sensory needs○ Adapting models like CBT, DBT, trauma-informed care○ Supporting transitions, endings, and high-risk scenarios <p>Recommendation 8: Create a Cross-Service Consultation Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate shared learning and peer support on autism.• Activities:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Connect interested services○ Share clinical reflections and case discussions○ Use feedback to tailor the space to staff needs <p>Recommendation 9: Adapt 'Stepping Up' Care Processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure stepped care is responsive to autistic service user needs.• Include:	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifying where autistic needs diverge from neurotypical models ○ Supporting staff understanding of those differences ○ Encouraging open discussion in MDTs <p>Recommendation 10: Make Neurodiversity-Friendly Pathways the Default</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from 'add-on' pathways to core, inclusive care design. • Co-design with autistic individuals, grounded in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Predictability ○ Flexibility ○ Affirmation <p>Recommendation 11: Invest in Early Recognition & Formulation Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equip clinicians to reduce diagnostic overshadowing. • Enable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Confident screening and formulation ○ Constructive conversations about neurodivergence <p>Recommendation 12: Improve Autism Recognition in Primary Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage early identification and autism-informed referrals. • Strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support GPs and referrers in autism awareness ○ Embed formulation into initial care pathways ○ Offer training to referrers for better referral quality 	
<p style="text-align: center;">8.6</p>	<p>Overall Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers are system-based, not due to lack of care or effort. • Services were not designed with neurodiversity in mind. • We now have the insight, evidence, and commitment to improve. 	

Agenda Item	Any other business?	Action and Due Date
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9.1	LG will be attending UEA’s Disability Week on 17th October, from 11:00 to 12:00, with a one to one-and-a-half-hour slot to speak on the topic of autism and stigma. He already has one autistic person confirmed to join him but is looking for an additional autistic person to speak alongside him. Anyone interested in taking part is encouraged to contact LG directly.	
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Agenda Item	Close of meeting	Action and Due Date
10.1	Co-Chairs thank all participants for coming and notified every one of the next meeting date.	

Future Meeting Dates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 25th November 2025 13:00 – 15:00 • Tuesday 25th November 2025 13:00 – 15:00 • Tuesday 27th January 2026 13:00-15:00 • Tuesday 31st March 2026 13:00-15:00 • Tuesday 26th May 2026 13:00-15:00 • Tuesday 28th July 2026 13:00-15:00 • Tuesday 29th September 2026 13:00-15:00

A Glossary of commonly used terms can now be found online at: www.norfolkautismpartnership.org.uk/glossary/

Board Minutes Agreed on the: 25/11/2025