Southern Health and Social Care Trust

TOGETHER, IMPROVING CARE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

Committee Chair Report for Board Meeting on 28th May 2026

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (‘the Committee’) met on 23rd April (a) and the 21st of May 2026 (b). The following is a summary of the areas considered at the meetings.

The formal record of the meeting remains the approved minutes.

1. Summary of areas considered (a) 23rd April 2026 (b) 21st May 2026

(a) 23rd April 2026

Cyber Security and Digital Services Presentation

Mrs Wilson (Director Planning, Performance and Informatics) gave a comprehensive presentation on the progress against outstanding internal audit recommendations and the strength of current governance and assurance arrangements. A critical in-depth discussion took place across cyber risk, digital delivery, technology enablement and progress in preparation for compliance with Network and Information Systems (NIS) Regulations, data protection, information asset owners. Assurance was given regarding controls on information leaving Trust systems, automatic transmission of diagnostic or fault reports to third party supplies, cyber, digital delivery and technology enablement risks, digital programmes including EQUIP, business continuity, disaster recovery.

The ARAC noted the update and was content with the level of assurance provided.

Internal Audit Progress Reports

ARAC were informed that four reports were being presented to the Committee at the meeting, along with follow-up work, while a further six reports remain in draft format awaiting management comments and agreement. Except for the risk management audit, all outstanding draft reports currently carry at least a partial limitation opinion.

The following reports were presented and discussed:

- People Framework (Limited Assurance)
- Maternity and Gynae (Satisfactory Assurance)
- Independent Neurology Recommendation (Satisfactory Assurance)
- Management of Sickness and absence (Satisfactory Assurance)

Year-end follow-up on outstanding Internal Audit Reports

- 87% are fully implemented, 11 partially implemented, 3% not implemented.

Internal Audit Plan 2026/27

- **Key areas -** EQUIP, Procurement and Contract Management, Patient Flow, Actioning Abnormal Diagnostic Blood Results, Management of Referrals, Encompass System Governance, Governance Audits, Business Continuity, Management of Violence and Aggression, Advisory Work on Sustainability.

Log of Financial Circulars

- Update on finance circulars issued during calendar year 2026 abd the statutory accounts timetable

Finance Circular – FAU memo 04-2025 – Timetable for ALB Annual Accounts 2025-26

Final Fraud Update Report 2025/26

Committee Self-assessment 2024/25

(b) 21st May 2026

Corporate Risk Register Update

Dr Austin presented the Corporate Risk Register update, the most significant relate to workforce capacity and retention, increasing demand pressures, challenges in maintaining access to services, financial sustainability.

Dr Austin also drew attention to emerging risks associated with digital infrastructure, including system resilience and the potential impact of IT outages, noting that these risks are becoming increasingly prominent across the wider health sector. Reputational and public confidence were identified as key risk considerations.

Internal Audit Progress Reports

The following reports were presented and discussed:

- Management of Agency Medical Locums – Limited Assurance
- Management of Discharges – Limited Assurance
- SHSCT Theatre Utilisation 2025-26 -Limited Assurance
- WLI – Purchased Healthcare – Limited Assurance
- IT Asset Management – Split Assurance- Satisfactory/Limited
- Risk Management – Satisfactory Assurance

BSO Shared Services Summary Report

Head of Internal Audit Annual Report

- Overall satisfactory assurance opinion – key findings relating to Epic utilisation, contact management and workforce planning. The timeliness of management responses was raised as an area needing more focus and improvement.

Draft Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31^{st} March 2026

- Trust has achieved financial balance for the year ended 31^{st} March and successfully delivered its savings target.

Consideration of Losses Write Off

- The Committee noted that appropriate governance and approval processes have been followed and recommended that the losses and write-offs be presented for approval to Trust Board.

Draft Governance Statement

- The Governance Statement subject to some amendments was noted

Draft Charitable Trust Funds Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2026

- The Committee noted the Annual Report and Accounts and discussed progress on the registration process with the Charity Commission

HSC Finance Circular Log

- The Committee noted the position as at 31^{st} March 2026

2. Issues for escalation to Trust Board

(a) 23^{rd} April 2026- None
(b) 21^{st} May 2026 - None

3. Action(s) requested/required of Trust Board

- None

M E Ensor.

Elizabeth Ensor
Non-Executive Director - Chair Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
24^{th} May 2026