

REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD – WEDNESDAY, 20 MARCH 2024

REVIEW OF IJB GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK

1 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Integration Joint Board (IJB):

1.1

Note that a review of the Governance Handbook has been carried out, consider and agree the proposed changes set out in Appendix 1.

1.2 Agree the proposals for the assurance framework to be included in the Handbook as a new section to be known as the “Assurance Framework’ being Part 7, as seen in Appendix 2.

2 Directions

2.1 No direction requires to be issued to Aberdeenshire Council or NHS Grampian as a result of this report.

3 Risk

3.1 Risk 2389:- Service/business alignment with current and future needs

4 Background

4.1 A review of the IJB Governance Handbook has been undertaken and this report sets out elements that would benefit from change, both as a result of audits, professional committee support and alignment between Committees.

4.2 Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee were reviewed and agreed by the IJB in March 2022 on the adoption of the Governance Handbook. In July 2023 a report was considered by the IJB Audit Committee proposing that it was appropriate to review their Terms of Reference and to consider developing an assurance framework that can be used by IJB Audit Committee members whilst considering reports. Rather than incorporating that assurance framework within the Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee we have included a new Assurance Framework for use by any of the IJB and its Committees as part 7 of the Handbook.

4.3 Amendments to the Handbook being proposed include amendments to:-

Part 1 – Standing Orders - with the insertion of a section on ‘Review of Membership’

Part 2 – Scheme of Delegation

- Audit Committee Terms of Reference, specifically quorum and meetings paragraphs

- CASWG Terms of Reference, specifically tidying up this section as a whole and quorum and meeting paragraphs.

Part 5 – additions to exempt information; and

Part 7 – the addition of the new “Assurance Framework”.

- 4.4 Sometimes it can be difficult to achieve the necessary quorum and accordingly to ensure that meetings and the IJB work continues to flow, uninterrupted, without lengthy disruption, we have proposed reducing quorum numbers for the CASWG Committee. Both IJB Audit Committee and CASWG Committee would accordingly only require 3 members (in addition to the Chair/Vice) going forward and this maintains consistency across the two committees.
- 4.5 With regards to the meetings it would be beneficial to have a pre-agreed timetable to comply with Agenda Publication. Minutes will be circulated with the reports for the next agenda. Committee Officer support will ensure all minutes follow a consistent template as will reports.
- 4.6 It is important that all papers/reports clearly state if they are accessible to the public or not public. The proposed wording ensures partnership information from an NHS source has been given due consideration.
- 4.7 The amended Terms of Reference for the Committees can be found in Appendix 1 to this report.

Committee Effectiveness and Development Needs

- 4.8 The Terms of Reference previously stated that the Committees would review their effectiveness and consider their development and training needs at least annually. A development session with all members of IJB Committees was held to facilitate a robust review of each of the Committee’s effectiveness, including whether they have the structure, processes, people and performance to deliver their remits. Self-evaluations by members were completed in or around January /February 2024 and those reviews/self-evaluations considered how the Committees interact with officers and with the IJB as a whole.
- 4.9 Following the completion of the self-assessment by members, an action plan will now be developed for the Committees from the data gathered. That action plan once devised and implemented will require to be tracked and monitored and will include relevant development and training needs for the committees.

Assurance Framework

- 4.10 Scrutiny, or challenge and review is fundamental to transparent, accountable decision making and performance improvement. Scrutiny is about assessing the impact of strategic policy and planning on communities and residents and the performance and quality of services. The role of IJB members is to provide a “critical friend” challenge to decision making, to reflect the voice and concerns of residents and communities, to lead and to own the scrutiny process and importantly to have a positive impact on the delivery and improvement of services. The goal of all scrutiny activity should be to improve performance and

members should bear this in mind when contemplating scrutiny activity, including understanding the value that the IJB or committee can bring.

- 4.11 In order to provide structure and to guide consideration of scrutiny activity and assurance, a proposed Assurance Framework has been developed. This will assist the IJB and its Committee in determining whether they are sufficiently assured by matters brought to them. A diagram demonstrating what this would look like is contained at Appendix 2.
- 4.12 The IJB Assurance Framework proposed sets out four sequential phases for consideration. Any reference to Committees includes the IJB other than in Phase Three.

Phase Zero

- 4.13 This is the initial decision point for the Committee allows them to determine whether or not they are sufficiently assured with a report. This will mainly focus on the internal audit reports but is not restricted only to this. Where the Committee is assured, no further action is required. Where the Committee is not assured, they can consider whether they wish to move to Phase One of the Assurance Framework.

Phase One - Report

- 4.14 The proposed Phase One of the Assurance Framework is that, where the Committee are not sufficiently assured, the Committee identify the specific issues where further assurance is required and request a Report back within an agreed timescale on the issues identified along with actions being undertaken to resolve the issues. When requesting further scrutiny, the Committee must be clear on what the matter identified for improvement is, and what improvements are expected. These must be realistic and achievable, and capable of being measured through the use of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timescale) indicators. The report will then come back to the Committee for consideration. Following consideration, the Committee will then need to consider whether or not they are sufficiently assured. There are three potential routes thereafter. One would be that the Committee is assured, and so no further action is required. The second option could be that the Committee is assured however wish to monitor progress until the recommendations are signed off. The third option is that the Committee is not sufficiently assured and so want to move to the next Phase of the Assurance Framework.

Phase Two - Workshop

- 4.15 Where the Committee are not sufficiently assured following Phase One, the Committee can move to Phase Two which could be a workshop session where the relevant stakeholders and Committee members come together to explore the issues, ask detailed questions and discussion on actions being taken to resolve the issues. A report summarising the discussion will then come back to the Committee for consideration. Following consideration, the Committee will then need to consider whether or not they are sufficiently assured. There are again three potential routes thereafter. One would be that the Committee is assured, and so no further action is required. The second option could be that

the Committee is assured however wish to monitor progress until the recommendations are signed off. The third option is that the Committee is not sufficiently assured and so want to move to the next Phase of the Assurance Framework.

Phase Three – Escalation to IJB or Investigation

- 4.16 In a situation where the Committee is not sufficiently assured following Phase Two, the next step is to refer the matter to the IJB with a note of the concerns of the IJB Audit Committee along with a summary of the risks and recommendations to the IJB for resolution.
- 4.17 The phases as described above provide clear options for the Audit Committee to consider when determining whether or not assurance has been provided on particular issues. The phases are designed to be sequential, with ultimate escalation to the IJB for consideration where the Committee remain unassured. The proposed assurance framework is presented with recommendation for approval and adoption. The Assurance Framework and flowcharts can be seen in Appendix 2 attached.

5 Summary

- 5.1 On the 5th July 2023 a report was presented by the Chief Officer Pam Milliken to the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board Audit Committee with several recommendations. The agreed reviews have now taken place and you have before you the amended Terms of Reference and Assurance Framework which we recommend that you now approve and adopt.
- 5.2 The Chief Officer, along with the Chief Finance Officer and the Legal Monitoring Officers within Business Services of the Council have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments have been incorporated within the report.

6 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 6.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required because the procedures proposed have no impact on those with protected characteristics and none have been identified during the process.

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07/03/2024



Appendices –

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Appendix 2: Assurance Framework – Part 7