

## **REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD**

### **23 August 2023**

#### **INITIATION OF REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK AND MEMBERSHIP**

##### **1 Recommendation**

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

- 1.1 Note the commencement of a review of the Governance Handbook**
- 1.2 Identify any areas within the Governance Handbook for review in addition to those noted in the report.**
- 1.3 Agree to initiate a review the membership of the IJB.**

##### **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 There are no risks identified on the Risk Register.

##### **4 Background**

- 4.1 The IJB adopted the Governance Handbook on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2022. The Governance Handbook sits alongside the Integration Scheme and sets out the high level governance arrangements for the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board.
- 4.2 The Governance Handbook contains the following:-
  - a. Part 1 - Standing Orders
  - b. Part 2 - Scheme of Delegation
  - c. Part 3 - Financial Regulations
  - d. Part 4 - Interpretation
  - e. Part 5 - Exempt information
  - f. Part 6 - Procedures and Guidance on Requests to Speak
- 4.3 The IJB agreed that the arrangements would be reviewed regularly, with the first taking place 18 months after approval hence the review at this stage.
- 4.4 There is currently a focussed project to strengthen the governance arrangements of the IJB and this review forms part of that project. Work is underway with the Audit Committee and the Clinical and Adult Social Work Governance Committees for them to complete a self-assessment in accordance with their Terms of Reference. This will identify areas for development and may arise in recommendations to change processes contained in the Handbook.



- 4.5 An assurance framework is also being developed which though initially for the Audit Committee, may be something that the IJB and all its Committees may want to use and incorporate into the Governance Handbook under a scrutiny section. An initial discussion has been had with the Audit Committee with further work scheduled for the next development session alongside the self-assessment exercise. The outcome from that session may have an impact on their recommendations for any changes to the Governance Handbook in accordance with their Terms of Reference. Given that the work is ongoing with the Audit Committee, it is recommended that the Audit Committee complete their consideration of the strengthening of their arrangements, as soon as is practicable, as part of the review of the Governance Handbook.
- 4.6 Engagement with key stakeholders within the partnership will be crucial in reviewing the governance arrangements to identify improvements to the Governance Handbook.

### **Membership**

- 4.7 The main area of the Handbook that would benefit from some clarity, in addition to any recommendations from audit, is in relation to membership contained in Part One – Standing Orders. Appendix 1 to this report sets out the current provisions. The Standing Orders should not duplicate provisions that are set out in legislation (the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Integration Joint Boards) (Scotland) Order 2014 is relevant here) nor the provisions contained within the Integration Scheme, the 2018 version is still the one referenced as the 2023 revised version is still with the Scottish Government for approval, however the Standing Orders should provide clarity and context.
- 4.8 The legislation states that a term of office of a voting member is to be determined by the constituent authorities but is not to exceed three years. At the end of a term of office, a member may be reappointed for another term of office. The purpose of the three year, or less, membership, is to give constituent authorities opportunity to review the membership. It is not intended to limit experience on the Board and does not preclude members being reappointed for any number of terms as long as the constituent authorities are content to do so. The Standing Orders would benefit from clarity on this point. Reports should be taken to both NHS Grampian Board and Aberdeenshire Council at the 3 year point to reaffirm or review membership. The legislation provides that the period can be for less than 3 years as the partners determine and so it would be appropriate for the second appointment for Council members to extend to the next local government election.
- 4.9 The legislation is silent on the review point for non-voting members as is the Integration Scheme. The Standing Orders provide that the IJB may review the non-voting membership at such times it sees fit. This is open ended and would benefit from a more defined period being set for review. It may, or may not, be appropriate to align this with the 3 year review period for voting memberships, or the IJB may wish to consider staggering this so that should there be changes at a review there is otherwise continuity.



- 4.10 Appendix 2 to this report sets out the current membership. It is appropriate to review the membership in accordance with the provisions of the Standing Orders. Research will also be undertaken of non-voting memberships across the country to identify the types of non-voting members in other places, and to compare practice across Scotland in terms of review periods. Recommendations will be brought to the IJB following the review.
- 4.11 The removal of members section provides for the situation where a member has not been in attendance. Should the situation occur where a member has not been in attendance for 3 consecutive meetings, contact will be made with them in the first instance to ascertain the reason why they were unable to attend, whether they wish to return to the IJB, and the timescale for their return. They may be offered a meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair with the aim of supporting them back to the IJB and to ascertain what support can be put in place. Should no response be received to initial contact or a reminder, a report will be brought to the IJB to determine whether or not to continue with that member or whether it should be terminated.
- 4.12 Similarly, if there is a complaint that a member acts in a way which brings the IJB into disrepute or in a way which is inconsistent with the proper performance of the functions of the IJB, the Chief Officer would investigate and ascertain the facts. A meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair would be called with the Chief Officer and any other relevant officers and a recommendation on membership would thereafter be brought to the IJB if appropriate.

## **5 Summary**

- 5.1 The Governance Handbook has been used to good effect since it was introduced. However, the aim is to ensure that it is continuously fit for purpose. It would be of use to officers if members could indicate any areas in the governance handbook, in addition to those already mentioned, where a review would be useful. Allowing time for the Committees to complete their self-assessments, develop the assurance framework and reviewing the membership provisions may result in changes being suggested to the Governance Handbook and so a report to the IJB on conclusion of the self assessments with proposed changes will be brought at a later date. The timescale for doing so would be before the end of 2023 at the latest.
- 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 report seeks to initiate a review of Governance processes. Should there be any impacts identified during the course of the review, an IIA will be brought to the IJB along with any proposals for change.



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Appendix 1 – Current membership provisions  
Appendix 2 – Current membership