

INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD

**COUNCIL CHAMBER - WOODHILL HOUSE, WESTBURN ROAD, ABERDEEN, AB16
5GB, WEDNESDAY, 19TH MARCH, 2025**

Integration Joint Board Members:

Dr J Tomlinson (Chair), Councillor A Stirling (Vice-Chair), Dr C Backwell, Councillor R Cassie (substitute for Councillor N Baillie), Councillor M Grant, Councillor D Keating and Councillor G Lang, Mr S Lindsay and Ms S Webb.

Integration Joint Board Non-Voting Members:

S Kinsey (Third Sector Representative), F Alderson (Third Sector Representative), V Brown (Third Sector Representative), C Wood (Carer Representative), F Culbert (Carer Representative), R Taylor (Primary Care Advisor), P Bachoo (Secondary Care Advisor), A Mutch (Service User Representative), J Barnard (Nursing Lead Advisor), I Kirk (UNISON Trade Union), K Grant (NHS Trade Union), L Jolly (Chief Social Work Officer), P Milliken (Chief Officer), S Donald (Interim Chief Finance and Business Officer) and M Beattie (Interim S.95 Officer).

Officers: L Flockhart, L Gravener, V Henderson, J Howie, A MacLeod, R McGregor, A McGruther, J Raine-Mitchell, (Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership); L Cowie, S Donald, R Meiklejohn, M Stevenson, N Stephenson and A McLeod (Aberdeenshire Council); E Black and A Cooper (NHS Grampian).

Also in attendance: C Smith, Grant Thornton, External Auditor.

Apologies: Councillor N Baillie, Ms J Duncan.

1 Sederunt and Declaration of Members' Interests

The Chair asked for Declarations of Interest. Councillor Cassie made a transparency statement in relation to Items 7 and 9 by virtue of his wife being employed by a care provider whose services are commissioned by the Council. Having applied the objective test he had concluded that he had no interest to declare.

2 Public Sector Equality Duty

In taking decisions on the undernoted items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010:-

(1) To have due regard to the need to:-

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- (b) advance equality and opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and

- (2) to consider, where an Integrated Impact Assessment has been provided, its contents and to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

3 Minute of Meeting of the Integration Joint Board of 5 February 2025

There had been circulated and was **approved** as a correct record the Minute of the Meeting of 5 February 2025.

4 Minute of Meeting of the Integration Joint Board of 19 February 2025

There had been circulated and was **approved** as a correct record the Minute of the Meeting of 19 February 2025, subject to the addition of Steven Lindsay and Susan Webb in the list of Members in attendance.

5 Integration Joint Board Action Log

There had been circulated a report by the Chief Officer providing updates on progress with actions which had still to be completed and advising when these were scheduled to be reported to the Joint Board. The Chief Officer provided updates on the action log and noted that a number of items were on the meeting agenda.

The Chair referred to a reference to the workforce plan and strategic priorities which was reported to the IJB on 5 February 2025 and asked for them to be added to the Action Log.

In other respects, the Integration Joint Board **noted** the current position as reported in the Action Log.

6 Chief Officer's Report

There had been circulated a report by the Chief Officer, providing an update of the ongoing work of the Health and Social Care Partnership, including an update on the Suicide Prevention work, National Care Service update, correspondence with Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, notification of the appointment of an Independent Chair of Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership and an update on Delayed Discharges.

By way of update, the Chief Officer and officers provided an update on ongoing work around suicide prevention including information on the new programme "Wave after Wave".

Having noted that the Scottish Government was continuing to progress with the amended National Care Service Bill, some concerns were expressed about the capacity to engage with new initiatives given financial constraints.

The Chief Officer provided an update on recent correspondence with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care on the service impact of the financial shortfall threatening the ability to maintain current service levels.

She also noted the recent appointment of the Independent Chair of the Aberdeenshire and Drugs Partnership.

Finally, the Chief Officer provided an update on delayed discharges, and ongoing work of the Delayed Discharge Improvement Group.

After discussion, the Integration Joint Board **agreed**:

- (1) that an update be provided at the next meeting on the recent briefing given to MPs, MSPs and Councillors on budget matters;
- (2) an update on the Communications Strategy to be provided at the next meeting to ensure that public and staff are well informed about the context and implications of the decisions being made; and
- (3) to welcome the appointment of the Independent Chair of the Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership and to wish her well in the role; and
- (4) in other respects to note the updates provided.

7 2025-2026 Revenue Budget Report

There had been circulated a report dated 11 March 2025 by the Chief Officer, proposing a revenue budget for 2025/26 for consideration, and providing information on the funding context, the medium term financial strategy, proposed Charging Policy and Unit costs for 2025/26 and providing an update on the 2024/25 financial position.

The Interim Chief Finance and Business Officer provided an overview of the report and advised that a comparison of income under the 2024/25 charges with the approved charges for 2025/26 showed a potential increase in income of £3.939 million. Under the full cost recovery model, this was £636,000 higher than the initial estimate presented to the Board on 19 February 2025. However, there was an overstatement of new funding by £826,000 due to double counting, which was offset by the revised estimate of income from increased charges. The shortfall of £190,000 had been added to efficiencies, increasing them from £7.819 million to £8.009 million.

She advised that the funding partners had agreed to underwrite the funding gap for 2025/26 of £17.155 million, confirming that the IJB will have a budget of £421.759 million for 2025/26. Discussions were ongoing with budget holders to determine where efficiencies would be allocated.

She confirmed that financial reporting would be done monthly to the IJB Senior Management Team and Partnership Management Teams, with quarterly reporting to Aberdeenshire Council.

Finally, she advised that the forecast overspend on the 2024/25 budget at the end of January 2025 was £24.968 million, which was £1.575 million lower than the forecast overspend at the end of December 2024.

During discussion, a Member asked if the Health and Social Care Partnership could deliver a further saving of £200,000 across the board. The Interim Chief Finance and Business Officer responded with concerns about the capacity to deliver any more savings due to existing pressures. Another Member asked whether the 2.5% savings target for the year was achievable, given that last year's target was not fully met. The Interim Chief Finance and Business Officer considered that this was achievable due to collaborative efforts with budget holders. A Member raised concerns about some of

the assumptions, including the pay increase figures. The Section 95 Officer clarified that the IJB budget assumed a 3% pay award. Another Member highlighted the importance of clear communication with staff and communities about the financial challenges and the impact on services.

Thereafter, the Chair moved, seconded by Councillor Stirling, that the IJB should approve recommendations 1.1 to 1.6 of the report.

As an amendment, Councillor Cassie, seconded by Councillor Grant, moved that the IJB should approve recommendation 1.1 to 1.6 with an additional recommendation 1.9 as follows:

“to agree to add the sum of £200,000 to the 2.5% efficiencies in order to fund the Adult Autism /Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Assessment Pathway at its previous level”.

The Voting Members of the Integration Joint Board then voted:

For the motion	7	Dr Tomlinson, Councillor Stirling, Dr Backwell, Councillor Keating, Councillor Lang, Mr S Lindsay, Ms S Webb.
For the amendment	2	Councillor Cassie and Councillor Grant.

The motion was carried and the Integration Joint Board **agreed** to approve recommendations 1.1 to 1.6 of the report.

Councillor Cassie entered his dissent from the decision arrived at.

In addition, after further discussion, the Integration Joint Board thereafter **agreed** to approve recommendations 1.7 and 1.8 of the report.

The recommendations are reproduced in full below.

The Integration Joint Board **agreed**:

- (1) to agree the 2025/26 Revenue Budget as set out in Appendix 1;
- (2) to instruct the Chief Officer to implement the 2025/26 charges from 7 April 2025 as approved by Aberdeenshire Council on 27 February 2025;
- (3) to instruct the Chief Officer to implement strengthened financial management and monitoring arrangements in order to stay within budget and to report back on the outcome from these arrangements;
- (4) to note that Aberdeenshire Council and NHS Grampian had agreed to underwrite the funding gap for 2025/26 of £17.155 million;
- (5) to instruct the Chief Officer to continue to develop options for reducing the anticipated funding gap for 2025/26 to mitigate the financial risk to partners;

- (6) to note that there are no reserves to reduce the forecast overspend and that the Integration Scheme provides the arrangements for addressing the overspend which is that the parties may jointly make additional one off payments to the IJB in order to meet the overspend. The split of one off payments between Parties in this circumstance will be based on each Party's proportionate share of the baseline payment to the IJB;
- (7) to note the 2024/25 financial position set out in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.8 and Appendices 4 and 5; and
- (8) to acknowledge the budget virements that have taken place during January 2025 in Appendix 6.

8 Adult Autism / Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Assessment Pathway

With reference to the minute of the IJB of 19 February 2025 (Item 3), there had been circulated a report by the Partnership Manager, North which addressed a range of work that had been undertaken following the meeting on 19 February 2025, to consider the development of a proposal for an in-house service.

The Mental Health and Learning Disability Manager introduced the report and confirmed that as at 31 March 2025 the commissioning of NHS Grampian Adult Autism assessment team and Aberdeenshire's ADHD assessment service would stop. He advised that since the last meeting a detailed assessment had been undertaken, and it was determined that setting up a limited service for six months was not feasible. Instead, establishing a new service would require new ways of working, including developing a new pathway and recruitment, necessitating recurring funding. He mentioned that patients on the current waiting list would be held until the new assessment service was established. He also suggested that patients with significant needs would still receive support through secondary care services even if the specific autism or ADHD assessment pathways were not available. He emphasised that whilst the waiting list for assessments was long, those with the most urgent needs would be prioritised and supported through existing mental health services.

During discussion, Members raised questions around the status of those waiting for diagnosis and officers advised that patients on the current waiting list would be held until a new assessment service was established. Some concerns were raised about the ethics of stopping the service and the capacity of secondary care to handle additional patients. Other Members expressed concerns about the impact on the IJB's ability to make informed decisions without clear information on the consequences of stopping the service. Another Member highlighted the need for clarity on the cohort on the waiting list that could be accommodated within the existing system and those who might fall through the cracks if the service was withdrawn and the need for more detailed information on the impact of the proposed £80,000 funding on other aspects of the service, specifically the full-time equivalent posts that would be cut to fund the new pathway. These concerns reflected the need for more detailed information and clarity on the implications of stopping the autism and ADHD assessment service and the potential impact on service users and staff.

Thereafter, after further consideration, the Integration Joint Board **agreed**:

- (1) to acknowledge the work Officers have undertaken following the IJB decision on 19 February 2025;
- (2) to note the inability to deliver a reduced Aberdeenshire service for a time limited period of six months;
- (3) that the IJB did not have enough information to make a well informed decision and to defer consideration for further information to ensure that all relevant details and implications are thoroughly examined before making a final decision. In addition, the issue should be referred to the Clinical and Adult Social Work Governance Committee to evaluate the clinical and service user risk; and
- (4) to note that as of 31 March 2025 the existing service for adult Autism and ADHD assessment would cease, as previously agreed on 19 February 2025.

9 Progress Update on Service Reviews

(For context, this item was considered before Item 7 – 2025/26 Revenue Budget report).

There had been circulated a report dated 6 March 2025 by the Chief Officer, which provided an update on the initial work undertaken for each of the service reviews/redesigns agreed by the IJB on 19 February 2025 and indicative timelines for reporting back with recommendations for each review.

The Chair advised that there had been two requests to speak on the item from (1) Ms Coralie Aitken and (2) Mr Saddiq Ahmed. The Integration Joint Board agreed to hear from both requests to speak.

The Chief Officer introduced the report and asked the IJB to acknowledge the initial work undertaken for each of the service reviews and redesigns. She highlighted the urgency of the reviews, noting that significant work must be completed, at pace, to bring recommendations back to the IJB. She emphasised the importance of engaging with stakeholders, including individuals accessing services, staff and the wider community, in order to understand the impacts of potential changes. She assured the IJB that meaningful and proportionate engagement was key to progressing the reviews.

The Board then heard from each of the speakers in turn.

Ms Aitken, an unpaid carer, emphasised the critical importance of day centre provision for her daughter who had severe learning difficulties. She highlighted the potential negative impacts for service cuts, including increased anxiety, depression and regression in individuals who rely on these services. She stressed that removing these services would lead to a crisis for carers and their loved ones, potentially resulting in higher long-term costs for the government due to increased need for residential care and medical support. She also raised concerns about the lack of proper consultation with families and the potential violation of the Equality Act and Carers Act.

Mr Ahmed, a widower and carer for his autistic son, expressed concerns about the proposed cuts to day services for adults with learning disabilities. He questioned the criteria used to determine eligibility for these services, suggesting they were designed

to exclude many current users. He highlighted the potential consequences of these cuts, including the closure of day centres and increased costs for families. He also raised issues about the lack of consultation and transparency in the decision making process, the potential legal implications and the negative impact on the mental and physical well being of service users and their carers.

The Chair thanked both speakers for their contributions.

During discussion, Members commented on and raised concerns about balancing the IJB budget whilst maintaining services and adhering to the Equality Act and Carers Act. One Member highlighted the cumulative effect of service cuts on individuals and the need for holistic assessments rather than siloed reviews. There were concerns raised about the long-term impact on carers' mental health and the potential costs of increased medical services due to stress. Another Member emphasised the need for clarity on legal obligations and the importance of understanding the constraints imposed by ring-fenced funding. The need for transformation in service delivery and the importance of involving staff in the review process was highlighted. The need to ensure the offer of advocacy support for carers and service users during consultations was raised and the need to consider the unintended consequences and the cumulative effect on individuals.

Further information was provided by the Chief Officer and officers in relation to the process of engagement and the importance of integrated impact assessments to understand the implications and mitigations. An assurance was given that assessments were conducted holistically and that alternatives would be considered for those impacted by service changes. Advocacy support was also available. The financial assessment process was clarified and the support provided to service users to manage increased charges. An assurance was given that all reviews would comply with the Equality Act and Carers Act.

Thereafter, the Integration Joint Board **agreed**:

- (1) to acknowledge the initial work undertaken for each of the service reviews/redesigns agreed by the IJB at its meeting on 19 February 2025, and indicative timelines for reporting back to the IJB with recommendations from each review;
- (2) to note that the engagement process should be improved to ensure clarity and support for those affected;
- (3) that the reviews must ensure that decisions are legally defensible and do not breach the Equalities Act and Carers Act;
- (4) the need for clear policies and documentation on disability related expenditure and financial assessments to ensure that service users can afford increased charges;
- (5) the importance of ensuring that service users and cares are provided with adequate advocacy support during consultations;
- (6) that all reviews would consult with users and information gathered would be fed into IIAs to ensure that the equality duty to pay due regard to impacts on those

with a protected characteristic was considered, which in turn will allow the IJB to make informed decisions; and

- (7) the need for a transformational approach to service delivery to avoid repeated cuts and ensure sustainable services.

10 AHSCP Response to Palliative Care Matters for All

There had been circulated a report dated 18 February 2025 by the Chief Officer which provided details of a response submitted by the Chief Officer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair on behalf of the IJB to a consultation on a Scottish Government draft strategy on palliative care and end of life care.

The Interim Strategy and Transformation Manager spoke to the report and advised that the consultation response emphasised the importance of palliative and end of life care and acknowledged the broad agreement with the intended aims and outcomes of the national strategy. However, it highlighted the challenges faced in delivering these services without additional recurring funding.

During discussion, there were some concerns raised about the number of strategies produced without sufficient funding to deliver them fully and Members emphasised the need to ensure a holistic approach to ensure that strategies were completed rather than introducing new ones.

Thereafter, the Integration Joint Board **agreed** to acknowledge and note the response submitted on behalf of the Integration Joint Board by the Chief Officer, exercising delegated authority and following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair in terms of Part 2 – Scheme of Delegation, paragraph 1.3 (z) of Section 2 of the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board Governance Handbook.

11 North East Route Map for Strategic Change: Supplementary Report

With reference to the Minute of the IJB of 5 February 2025 (Item 13), when the IJB had sought further information and clarification on a number of aspects, there had been circulated a report dated 6 March 2025 by the Programme Lead for the Route Map, on behalf of the Chief Officer, which provided clarification of the issues that had been discussed at the previous meeting.

During discussion, Members noted the importance of engaging with the Strategic Change Board and the need for collaboration across the three IJBs and NHS Grampian. Some concerns were raised about aligning the priorities of the IJB with the Strategic Change Board and the need to ensure that the Strategic Plan reflects the needs and priorities of Aberdeenshire. The need for clear mapping and understanding of priorities was emphasised. There was also mention of the potential impact of the Strategic Change Board's decisions on the IJB's Recovery Plan and the importance of monitoring and managing these impacts. There were also some questions about the governance structure of the Strategic Change Board and how decisions would be made, ensuring that the IJB retains control over its strategic direction. The need for collaboration and transformation was acknowledged, with a focus on working together to achieve sustainable services and addressing the challenges faced by the health and social care system.

Thereafter, Councillor Cassie moved, seconded by Councillor Grant, that the IJB approve the recommendations in the report and agree the commitment of the IJB to the Strategic Change Board and to move forward collaboratively with immediate effect.

As an amendment, Councillor Stirling, seconded by the Chair, moved that the IJB approve the recommendations in the report, subject to the need for the IJB to support officers in decision making and ensuring that the priorities of the Strategic Change Board align with the Recovery Plan and strategic direction of the IJB and the need to monitor progress to ensure that decisions do not negatively impact on the Recovery Plan, before contributing significantly to the Strategic Change Board.

The Voting Members of the Integration Joint Board then voted:

For the motion	2	Councillor Cassie and Councillor Grant.
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For the amendment	7	Dr Tomlinson, Councillor Stirling, Dr Backwell, Councillor Keating, Councillor Lang, Mr S Lindsay, Ms S Webb.
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The amendment was carried and the Integration Joint Board **agreed**:

- (1) to note the responses to each of the requests for further information and clarification;
- (2) to note the Strategic Change Board (SCB) Terms of Reference explicitly state that it is a collaborative effort between NHS Grampian and the three IJBs (Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City and Moray) without any intention to alter existing governance structures nor usurp the strategic remit of the IJB;
- (3) to receive proposals for the draft Route Map, when detailed in Summer 2025, for agreement;
- (4) to note the role of the Chief Officer in serving as the direct link between the IJB and SCB and balancing capacity and workload considerations; and
- (5) subject to the need for the IJB to support officers in decision making and ensuring that the priorities of the Strategic Change Board align with the Recovery Plan and strategic direction of the IJB and the need to monitor progress to ensure that decisions do not negatively impact on the Recovery Plan, before contributing significantly to the Strategic Change Board.