
News release

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Serious financial concerns at Fife Integration Joint Board

The organisation responsible for planning health and social care services in Fife is facing significant and ongoing financial problems, with recurring overspends.

The Accounts Commission, Scotland's local authority watchdog, reports that Fife Integration Joint Board (IJB) has had overspends in 2018/19 and in the previous two years. These overspends had to be met by the IJB's two partners, NHS Fife and Fife Council.

The Commission highlights that ongoing financial pressures will likely undermine how the IJB will be able to improve vital health and social care services for the people of Fife.

Whilst national reports by the Accounts Commission have reported on significant challenges faced by many IJBs beyond Fife IJB, the Commission are clear there are long-standing financial difficulties within Fife IJB that need to be addressed. The board must also tackle weaknesses in its performance reporting, commit to delivering on agreed recovery actions and address a lack of clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of the IJB and its partners.

Graham Sharp, Chair of the Accounts Commission said, "The Accounts Commission are seriously concerned about slow progress in Fife IJB and its clear ongoing financial sustainability issues. If this persists it will inevitably affect the ability of the IJB and its partners, Fife Council and NHS Fife, to improve health and social care services local people depend on.

"We welcome some recent progress, including permanent appointments to the posts of Chief Officer and Chief Finance Officer and a review of its financial strategy. Now, as a matter of urgency, these plans must be actioned and delivered on. Above all, a robust financial recovery plan must be put in place."

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Notes to editors

1. Audit Scotland has prepared this report for the Accounts Commission. All Audit Scotland reports published since 2000 are available at www.audit-scotland.gov.uk
- The Accounts Commission is the public spending watchdog for local government. It holds councils and various joint boards and committees in Scotland to account and help them improve. It operates impartially and independently of councils and of the Scottish Government, and meets and reports in public
 - Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000, under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts

Commission for Scotland.

2. Fife Integration Joint Board is responsible for planning and commissioning health and social care services in Fife which are delivered through Fife Health and Social Care Partnership. This includes social work services for adults and older people, community hospitals, children's community health services and social care services for the people of Fife.
3. Auditors in their report advised the Accounts Commission that Fife Integration Joint Board is expected to overspend by over £10 million in the 2019/20 financial year, against an annual budget of £555 million. This budget shortfall must be met by the two partners in the IJB, NHS Fife and Fife Council.
4. In November 2018 the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission published Health and social care integration: update on progress report. We reported that Integration Authorities are operating in an extremely challenging environment and there is much more to be done to increase the pace of health and social care integration.
5. In the Accounts Commission's Local Government in Scotland Financial Overview 2018/19, published in December 2019, we reported that a majority of IJBs struggled to break even.
6. In September 2019 Audit Scotland published the Annual Audit Report on Fife IJB.