

JBC Steering Board - Minutes

28 January 2021

14.00 – 15.00pm

JBC progress update and current priorities – Clare Gardiner (DG, JBC)

Clare Gardiner welcomed all attendees and set out the purpose of the Steering Board as being to support four-nation alignment of strategic priorities and review the performance of the JBC, with a specific focus on its ability to act as a four-nation enterprise.

Clare noted the meeting of the Technical Board held last Friday had been successful with useful discussions between CMOs covering de-escalation parameters, updated borders' methodology and new variants studies.

Following this, Clare agreed to make sure weekly papers provided to CMO's offices reach Steering Board Members and officials in a timelier fashion.

Clare outlined that she has been asked to lead a package of work relating to JBC and the transition to NIHP. This work is very much in the early stages, but engagement at this point is important to ensure the requirements of all nations are met.

Priority projects update and next steps

The Priority Projects stem from commitments in the Political and Agency Agreement and the Implementation Plan approved by the Ministerial Board on 30 November 2020. The project teams consist of members from all four nations.

The Embeds Project has two main strands:

1. Deepening informal analytical collaboration
2. Formal embed arrangements

It was noted that good progress had been made on both fronts. The formal embed arrangements are going especially well: after discussions with HR and the Devolved Administrations, our teams are ready to begin drafting business cases and draft agreements.

Integration approaches are due to be presented to the Steering Board in February with the business cases following shortly after. DAs would like to see this project progressed quickly, highlighting the importance of it to support a genuine deep partnership.

Clare concurred with this sentiment and suggested that colleagues could be brought in to be a part of the stripy teams as soon as possible. Ian agreed that he would welcome the participation.

The Analytical Pipeline project will integrate DAs into the JBC's analytical and prioritisation processes, engendering deeper analytical collaboration and providing greater visibility of the work of the JBC. The project will also establish a mechanism for the DAs to shape and commission bespoke analysis from the JBC.

Following approval of the proposed analytical pipeline process by the governing forum, the project will continue with implementation in a phased and supported way which uses insight from the experience to further enhance the model.

Discussion on priorities and strategic direction

DA participation at the Prioritisation Panel meeting was endorsed as very helpful. The opportunity to see the prioritisation of issues across JBC's analytical work helped to inform DAs' assessment of their own priorities. DA priorities may evolve or be adjusted as a result of this insight.

The importance of including DA analysts in projects at the earliest opportunity was recognised by all along with a desire for gaining further insight into long Covid and variants, while retaining the agility for prioritising projects.

Performance of the JBC as a four-nation enterprise and deepening collaboration going forward: Alignment at the borders would be a good focus for deepening relationships. It was agreed there was merit in this proposal, particularly with addressing the question of how to ease lockdown restrictions. Such an approach might focus on sectors such as schools, retail and hospitality.

It was agreed that foresight of key thematic issues would be helpful in assisting DAs to align priority work. The Prioritisation Panel process will continue to be adjusted to meet this.

Attendees:

Clare Gardiner (DG, JBC)

Richard Pengelly (Permanent Secretary, Department of Health, NI)

Caroline Lamb (DG Health and Social Care, SG)

Reg Kilpatrick (DG, Covid Crisis Coordination, WG)

Chief Operating Officer, JBC

Johanna Hutchinson (Director, Data and Data Science, JBC)

Thom Waite (Director, Health Protection, JBC)

Paul Cleary (Director, Analysis and Assessment, JBC)

Paul McLoughrie (Director, Response, Support and Learning, JBC)

9 government officials and observers from the JBC and Devolved Administrations