

## **Governance Committee**

### **Committee Chair Report for Board Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

The Governance Committee ('the Committee') met on 7<sup>th</sup> July and 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025. The following is a summary of the areas considered at both meetings to update the Board. The formal record of both meetings remains the approved minutes.

#### **1. Summary of areas considered**

- The Committee accepted for assurance the respective Chair's reports from the Safety and Quality Steering Group, the Organisational Governance Steering Group and the Standards, Compliance and Regulation Steering Group.
- The Committee noted the Corporate Risk Register.
- The Committee approved for submission to the Board (for approval) the Governance Committee Annual report.
- The Committee accepted for assurance the report from the Accountable Officer responsible for Controlled Drugs.
- The Committee accepted for assurance the report from the Accountable Officer which set out Southern Trust Compliance with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) Professional Standards.
- The Committee accepted for assurance the report on Non-Executive Directors visits to Children's Homes presented by the Director of Children's Services.
- The Committee noted for information three reports covering Fire Services, Laboratory Services and Service User Feedback. Copies of these reports are attached. The reports provided in-depth background on Areas of Good Practice, Challenging Issues of Concern (including issues that are noted on Risk Registers) and Areas of Achievement/Improvement. The purpose of commissioning

these reports is to initiate discussion about developing stabilisation and recovery structures/proposals to address areas of concern.

- In relation to Fire Services the Committee was very concerned at the high level of risk across a range of areas identified in the report. Of particular concern was the reporting of: (a) 47% of all Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) being overdue (199 of 423). Since Jun 2023 the range of overdue FRAs has varied between 32% - 48%; (b) the Trust's Fire Safety Management Policy and associated guidance, places requirements on Directorates to ensure that their Nominated Fire Officers (NFOs) are completing the requisite Fire Safety duties. However, to date (11-Jul-25) there is only a 32% level of compliance due to the high number of vacant NFO posts; and (c) following Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) statutory audits they have issued two Action Plans with defined completion dates. South Tyrone Hospital was originally issued on 10 September 2024, and two extensions have been agreed. The final deadline is 29 August 2025. If actions not significantly progressed by then, NIFRS will likely issue an Enforcement Notice on the Trust. Daisy Hill Hospital was issued on 13 June 2025 with the deadline for completion of actions is 4 December 2025. Some remediation has been undertaken to address the required Actions. HoS's for Estate Operations and Estates Development should provide levels of compliance within their particular Estates Governance Reports. The Committee agreed that a Recovery Plan is required to address the challenging issues of concern, and the Committee Chair should write to the Trust's Chief Executive Officer asking him to consider establishing a PRINCE 2 type project to carry out this work. In the months ahead the Committee would consider developing measures to address the high number of vacant NFO posts.
- In relation to Laboratory Services the Committee agreed to ask SLT to consider whether a project management approach would provide a focussed approach to addressing the challenging issues of concern. The Committee Chair also agreed to consider how best to address the challenging issues of concern issues which are likely to be resolved through the DoH proposals for transforming laboratory services at the regional level.
- In relation to Service User Feedback the Committee noted that the new NIPSO system designed to resolve complaints would likely address the challenging issues of concern. The Board will be briefed on the new system in due course.

- The Committee noted and welcomed the areas of good practice and achievement/improvement across all three services and thanked the respective teams for their dedication and diligence.

## **2. Issues for escalation to Trust Board**

- The Committee was concerned that in relation to Cyber security, the business case for the HSC Regional Security Operations Centre was still awaiting approval from BSO and felt this remains a significant risk to the Southern Trust. While this risk is on the Corporate Risk Register and being actively monitored by the Trust the Committee agreed that this issue should be escalated to the Board to discuss and determine whether there is further action that the Trust could take to expedite the approval of the Business Case.

## **3. Action(s) requested/required of Trust Board**

- Note the minutes from 7<sup>th</sup> July 2025 Committee meetings.

Mr Jackie Johnston  
Non-Executive Director - Chair  
On behalf of the Governance Committee  
5<sup>th</sup> September 2025