

New interim chief vows reform at health board

BY ALASDAIR CLARK AND LIAM RUTHERFORD, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

New NHS Tayside interim chief executive Professor Caroline Hiscox has promised reform to tackle funding challenges facing the health system.

Prof Hiscox started work in Tayside on Monday after leaving the top job at NHS Grampian.

Speaking at her first board meeting, Prof Hiscox said she would reform how the health board does things to create a “sustainable” system.

She re-joins NHS Tayside after a five-year spell in Grampian, which included work on a “ground-breaking” recruitment campaign which attracted 100 Australian-based nurses to north-east Scotland.

Prior to her move north in 2015, Prof Hiscox worked

as associate nurse director in Tayside.

Speaking at her first board meeting yesterday, she said: “My objectives as chief executive are two-fold, firstly to ensure that NHS Tayside continues to provide the high-quality patient-centred services in a timely way, with an empowered workforce that knows that we as a board put their wellbeing at the centre of our decision making. And secondly to reform how we do things to ensure that we have a sustainable health and care system going forward.

“It will absolutely be of no surprise to any of you to hear me say that health and care systems across the globe are facing sustainability challenges, and Scotland is no exception to this.”

Her appointment comes as predecessor Grant Archibald stands down from the six-figure role he took up in 2019.

The former hospital porter, 62, announced in August that he planned to retire on December 31 after 40 years with the health service. We told how news of his departure prompted fierce criticism from insiders, with Mr Archibald dealing with several legacy scandals during his time at the top of the health board.

Dundee-based MSP Michael Marra said Prof Hiscox should focus on three key areas. He told *The Courier*: “The new chief executive does not have her troubles to seek. The pressures on our local NHS services are significant and will only increase over the winter months.



Professor Caroline Hiscox.

“From my work with constituents and experts I would highlight three areas that require significant focus.

“The first is that GP services have disintegrated for many in the region. The quality of service is far too inconsistent and acute medical services are being

undermined by the huge deficits in primary care.

“The second theme is the long-term reform of critical failing services – most specifically mental health and addiction services.”

He added: “The third and perhaps most critical area of change is the culture of leadership that for years has been secretive and defensive.

“That has been seen in the handling of the Eljamel scandal, in the misleading response to the Strang Review of mental health, in the treatment of press queries and more.

“Only real transparency from the new chief executive and the board can allow everyone across the community to work together to deliver the NHS that our citizens so badly need.”