



**Governance Meeting
Minutes of meeting held on
14 November 2023**

10:00 – 12:15

In person and via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Nicola Killean (NK)	Commissioner
Nick Hobbs (NH)	Head of Advice and Investigations
Nicola Vallance-Ross (NVR)	Head of Corporate Services
Ezmie McCutcheon (EMc)	Head of Communications
Gina Wilson (GW)	Head of Strategy
Judith Chisholm (JC)	Executive Assistant

Apologies: None

Chair: Nicola Killean

Minutes: Judith Chisholm

	Details	Action By
1.	Welcome and apologies	
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies.	
1.2	Declaration of Interests No declarations.	
1.3	Minutes and actions from previous meeting The minutes of the Governance meeting held on 20 July 2023 were approved.	
2.	Updates	
2.1	<p>Commissioner Update</p> <p>The Commissioner reflected on the previous three months since taking up post. The induction process has been really supportive and helpful. The Commissioner has met individually with all of the staff team, and has had frequent meetings with members of the Senior Management Team. The Commissioner has had meetings with members of the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee and the Education, Children and Young People Committee of the Scottish Parliament. The Commissioner has met with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice from the Scottish Government. The Commissioner has been building links with other Officeholders and has had regular meetings with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. There have been a lot of meetings with stakeholders both from the sector and creative organisations. The Commissioner has had three meetings with our Young Advisors and attended six participation visits with children and young people. The Commissioner attended the European Network for Ombudspersons for Children Annual Conference and has established links with Commissioners from the British and Irish Network of Ombudsman and Children's Commissioners. There have been two external speaking engagements and first live media broadcast on BBC Lunchtime Live. The Office have published its report into the use of hotel type accommodation for refugee and asylum seekers and those experiencing homelessness. The Strategic Plan process is developing well. The Commissioner reflected that it has been a good three months, strong relationship foundations are developing internally and externally that has provided a sense of the diversity of the role of Commissioner and the Office of the Commissioner. The Commissioner thanks SMT for their support throughout this period of transition.</p>	

2.2	<p>Senior Management Team Update</p> <p>There has been a focus across the Office of supporting the transition between Commissioners. This has been a positive process but has required a lot of resource.</p> <p>Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNCRC Incorporation Bill – this is at the reconsideration stage and there is some movement in terms of the implications on our resource and increased powers. - Strategic plan – we have taken a comprehensive approach which has led to a huge volume of desk-based work which will stand us in good stead for other pieces of work. Valuable use of time – invested more staff resource in the process. - Intense policy period both Parliamentary and Scottish Government. This has required a lot of reactive work from the Office. There are some planned pieces of work that are coming to fruition together with a lot of reactive work. It is a period where we are looking at wholesale system reform across almost every area of children’s lives at same time. - Child Protection Policy – the current policy is being reviewed and updated. ACTION: SMT to review and sign off updated policy at next SMT meeting November <p>Communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were no exceptions report updates. <p>Corporate Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It has been a busy period. The team have been focussing on core work but due to increased capacity in the team there has been resource to support the wider work of the Office, this may change if resourcing declines. - There has been an increased risk of phishing attempts and cyber security risks. We have tightened our security suite given the increased risk and are rolling out training for the team. ACTION : review risk register and business continuity plan and consider if needs updated in light of increased risk. 	SMT
2.3	<p>Advice and Investigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The team have had reduced capacity over recent months but now preparing for Legal Officer to return from secondment in January. <p>Delivery Plan</p>	ALL

	<p>- It was noted that the strategic plan process provides a new opportunity to develop the style of the delivery plan to embed the monitoring process and evaluate work. It was noted that there are challenges with this particularly around capturing reactive work in the delivery plan. It was agreed that would revisit this in February with a view to developing a plan that can be reviewed quarterly as a framework for decisions as a leadership team and for teams as part of Contribution Management Plans.</p> <p>ACTION – Discussion regarding delivery plan templates and models to be discussed as part of SMT February Strategic Plan work</p>	SMT
3.	Governance	
3.1	<p>Annual Review of Register of Interests</p> <p>SMT reviewed and noted no updates for this meeting. To be reviewed at next Senior Management Team meeting in terms of new joiners.</p>	SMT
3.2	<p>Budget Submission for 2024/2025</p> <p>This has been submitted to the SPCB. We have looked at efficiency savings through budget recognising the restrictions on public purse. Our efficiency savings have been based on reducing operational budget lines to allow for some increased resource in the staff team but noting if those are not met need to revert to previous operational budget.</p> <p>We continue to consider shared services to provide efficiencies.</p> <p>ACTION : Commissioner and Head of Corporate Services to continue discussions on shared services as part of regular catch-ups.</p>	NVR and NK
3.3	<p>Annual accounts signed off by Advisory Audit Board</p> <p>The annual report and accounts have been signed off by Audit Scotland and have been laid in Parliament.</p>	
3.4	<p>Audit Outcomes</p> <p>The Audit Outcomes and Management Responses were noted.</p>	

4.	Monitoring	
4.1	<p>Finance</p> <p>Finances are as expected with a overspend on staffing costs. Our application for contingency to cover that has been accepted by the SPCB. We are not drawing this down if efficiencies can be found and we will rephase budget to not include contingency but based on approved budget.</p> <p>ACTION: NK, GW and EK to catch up on expected participation spend.</p>	NK, GW and EK
4.2	<p>Risk register</p> <p>The risk register was reviewed and updated in light of recent movements. It was agreed that subject to those minor amendments comfortable covers main risks from organisation and operational perspective. It was noted that we will be going through a procurement process for our IT services and that this will carry risk.</p> <p>ACTION – Head of Corporate Services to review risk register and update in light of plans for procurement process.</p>	NVR
4.3	<p>Health and Safety</p> <p>It was noted that health and safety matters are currently considered as part of individual team members one to ones and Senior Management team meetings.</p> <p>ACTION: Commissioner and Head of Corporate Services to work together on what would like to capture and bring to Governance meeting.</p>	NK and NVR
5.	Children and Young People’s Participation	
5.1	<p>A significant focus has been on setting up participation activities for strategic plan development. We are also in the process of recruitment for new Young Advisors and over the next few months we will be doing active recruitment. We are focussing on recruiting in a way that can have a representative group of young people from across Scotland bringing together different backgrounds and perspectives. Opportunity to recruit as we go on participation activities.</p>	
6.	Continued professional development and training	

6.1	<p>Contribution Management Plans</p> <p>Corporate Services will have a central place that can store and update with team's status of plans. It was agreed to do a review of the Contribution Management Plan forms and process to consider if it could be a simpler format and to form a working group of staff to look at this. It was also agreed that it would be good to reset the Contribution Management Process to start at the beginning of the financial year in April with a view to all team members having completed Contribution Management Plans by the end of April.</p> <p>ACTION: Head of Corporate Services to review Contribution Management Plans with some team members and get feedback.</p> <p>ACTION: All to book in time in April to undertake Contribution Management Plans with teams</p>	<p>NVR</p> <p>ALL</p>
6.2	<p>Whole staff training</p> <p>The annual plan was noted and it was agreed that this should be reviewed in Governance meetings. This should also have option to add in training suggestions and then make decisions as a group to take forward.</p> <p>ACTION: Head of Corporate services to update Whole Staff Training Plan to include additional section for suggested training for team</p>	<p>NVR</p>
7.	Topics for future meetings	
	<p>The Commissioner provided an overview of potential agenda items for future Governance meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consolidate agenda items if overlap between Senior Management Team meetings and Governance meeting. It was agreed that this could best be done by comparing the Terms of Reference for each of those meetings. <p>ACTION: Head of Corporate Services to review Terms of Reference for meetings and discuss with Commissioner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity mapping - Internal communications and decision making matrix 	<p>NVR</p>