CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S Commissioner Scotland

Governance Meeting
Minutes of meeting held on
5th March 2024

14:00-17:00
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
Amanda White (AW)	Executive Assistant

Apologies: **None**

Chair: **Nicola Killean**

Minutes: Amanda White

	Details	Action By
	Start: 14:00	
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 14 November 2023 were approved.	

2.	Updates	
2.1	**Commissioner Update** The Commissioner shared positive reflections on the work that had been undertaken for the past three months. Strategic plan engagement work had been extensive and meaningful which included digital resources created and distributed, data collection and analysis-esgoil assemblies, in-person events with children and young people, and the roundtable events . Other highlights from this quarter included introductory meetings; meeting the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills; Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise; meeting with the Team Lead for tackling child poverty with Scottish Government; and two BINOCC meetings including one of which we hosted. The Commissioner had also delivered the keynote speech at Argyll and Bute Teaching Conference The focus for the next 3 months will include finalising the delivery plan; thanking children and young people for their contributions and explaining the work we will undertake, beginning the contribution management planning and training plans for the whole office; targeted engagements with children and duty bearers; and initiating thematic pieces of work on education and child poverty.	
	Senior Management Team Update **Advice and Investigations**: NH shared highlights from the previous 3 months that included attending the strategic plan roundtables and hearing the office's legal function reflected in conversations with external stakeholders. Complex discussions with Scottish Government regarding court rules and incorporation had resulted well. Preparations have begun for the new legal powers which has been positive. Research was underway to consider how more targeted information could shape the advice function. NH noted that the Human Rights Bill and Commissioner Inquiry offers a real opportunity to clarify and bolster our powers. **Strategy:** Strategy highlights were the desk-based research and the engagements for the strategic plan. Positive relationship building with new and existing stakeholders and the opportunity for long-term progress with both.	

Challenges to note were some capacity issues, short deadlines from external requests had impacted staff capacities, and the general volume of work.
The next 3 months focus will be on initiating large pieces of work on the delivery plan, accountability tracking, and working with key partners on education and child poverty work.
Strategy has recently recruited new Young Advisors and GW shared there is a diverse mix of young people in the group. GW felt energised and looked forward to meeting them.

Corporate Services:
NVR discussed the establishment of the Shared Services Network Group. A quarterly meeting for Heads of Corporate Services to discuss best practice, shared services and identify other ways of working together. The group acts as a knowledge hub and a key source of information.
Internal Audit is complete for communications and governance.
NVR was pleased with the Corporate Services Team working at full capacity with a full staff complement making tasks and projects achievable such as procurement and HR policy work. This would not be possible moving forward without additional staff in place.
Financial reporting is on target and well communicated with the group. In addition, NVR requested an opportunity with the development of the delivery plan for the office to allocate budgets early on to support management in managing our finances.
NVR confirmed the Finance Officer would be extending her hours to take on additional financial management during Audit and to support the forthcoming IT project.

Communications:
EM was pleased with the audit sign off on Communications. Other highlights included the communications team being involved in participation work on the strategic plan, and was pleased with the Commissioner's interview on BBC Lunch Time Live.
EM shared how the office had been randomly selected by Government Digital Service at the end of 2023 and was happy to report sign-off regarding our website accessibility. A good outcome from that had been the procurement of a website monitoring system to help us manage our website going forwards.
Discussions had begun regarding our document accessibility in the office with further focus on this in the coming months. Whole team training will be planned throughout the year, investment in technology and licences to support this if budget allows, and templates needs to be created to support staff.
Communications have upcoming work on office reports which include the annual report, strategic plan reports, and the BSL Plan due by 6th May.

	Action: Add accessible documents to the next SMT agenda for further discussion. The Commissioner thanked all for their excellent progress across all services and function areas.	
3.	**Governance**	
3.1 **3.2**	**Governance Group Draft Terms of Reference compared to SMT Terms of Reference** The group reviewed the updated Terms of Reference for the SMT and Governance groups and agreed these, subject to the following amends / additions Add to the description of each TofR: - Maintain and monitor values and culture across the organisations. Add to the Governance group quarterly agenda: - Performance against strategic objectives and delivery plan. - HR HR agenda to have rolling items across the year, with each being brought once: - CPD Planning - Staff Survey Feedback - Attendance and Sickness - Wellbeing plan - Policies – annual schedule for review Change timescales to papers for both meetings to 1 week in advance. SMT agenda to be updated to include: Quarterly agenda item: - Child protection and safeguarding - Staff Training and Development Change the wording on Commissioner attendance to include *'the Commissioner may request to attend the SMT meeting to discuss a specific agenda items'.* Child Protection and Safeguarding report to be brought annually to the Governance meeting. **Action – Executive Assistant to update the ToR documents.** **Action – Executive Assistant to update the Annual Planner.**	

3.3	**Review Annual Planner** All agreed to move the SMT Contribution Management Plan (CMP) meetings to October and then the Staff CMP meetings to November. **Internal Audit Draft report – Governance** NVR shared the draft report and discussed the recommendations. The auditor had requested an overview of SMT duties which are contain within the ToR provided. **Action - NVR to ask the auditor for more information and if any additional information required and confirm deadline for completion of March 2025.** The Commissioner noted the action relating to SMT skills analysis can be completed by self-evaluation and follow up discussion as part of the Contribution Management Plan process. **Action - GW agreed to write the policy process for strategic planning and agreed the deadline of March 2025.** All happy to accept the recommendations. NVR will accept the recommendations with the auditors. The Commissioner congratulated all involved in the successful external and internal audits completed.	
3.4	**Audit Plan timescales** NVR talked through the dates in the draft report. Corporate Services deadline for submission of the Annual Report is 16th August and requested preparation time in advance of this date. SMT agreed provisionally to have the Annual Report completed by the end of June 2024 to keep our Audit on track.	
4.	**Strategic Planning**	
4.1	**Review and agree strategic plan 2024 – 28** GW shared the strategic objectives and ways of working draft for review. Changes were agreed during the discussion. GW agreed to circulate the final draft by COB on 6th March for review by all on 7th March. The final version will be submitted on 8th March.	
4.2	**Delivery plan template and evaluation and monitoring** GW requested feedback via email and follow up meetings are in the diary throughout March to develop the delivery plan together.	

5.	**Monitoring**	
5.1 **5.2** **5.3**	**Finance update** New budget phasing had been submitted to the SPCB. The reports are clear and helpful, finances are on track. Thanks noted for the Finance Officer. Currently preparing for year-end. **Risk Register** Organisational: Public Liability NVR confirmed business insurance did not cover legal advice provided by us. Legal cover related to our new powers would need to be separate. **Action: NH to instruct Advice and Investigation team to obtain three quotes for legal insurance.** Organisational: Travel Restrictions all agreed this can be removed. Organisational: add in new risk regarding current landscape, possible impact of new commissions impacting powers and budgets. **Action: wording for new risk to be added.** Operational – Key Risk (1B) amend the dates. Operational – Pandemic underspend impacting budgets (2B) all agreed to remove. **Action – NVR and SMT to amend risk register.** **Health and Safety** Agreed to add to the Governance meeting agenda once a year and monthly SMT meets. NVR is currently updating the H&S Policy and will share with SMT once finalised.	GW/NH
6.	**Continued professional development and training**	
	NVR has started a document to map out training for the year ahead and has shared with all for feedback. The Commissioner requested we carry it forward to the next SMT and Governance meeting to look at the year ahead. GW shared that the Policy Officer would be delivering Human Rights Training at the team meeting next month, planned for 17th April.	
	Meeting end: 17:00	

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7.	Actions	
	- **Contribution Management** Plans: All to book in time in April and May to complete these for all staff. - **ToR**: Amend both the SMT and Governance ToR with the changes discussed. - Audit: NVR to ask the auditor for more information and an example of what they need with regards to SMT duties, and to confirm deadline March 2025. - **Audit**: GW agreed to write the policy process for strategic planning and agreed the deadline of March 2025. - **Legal Insurance:** NH to instruct Advice and Investigation team to obtain three quotes. - **Risk** Register: NVR to remove Travel Restrictions (7A) from the Organisational risks. Operational – Key Risk (1B) amend the dates. Pandemic underspend impacting budgets (2B) all agreed to remove. NVR to add in Cyber Security as a risk and the IT Procurement which will hold risk. - **Risk** Register: create wording for new risk to be added regarding current landscape, new roles, new commissions impacting powers and budgets. - **SMT meeting agenda items to be added:** ○ Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy sign off - GW ○ Accessible Documents – further discussion required - EM ○ Annual Report timescales and who is required for input - NVR ○ Staff Training / Development (standing agenda item) ○ Child protection and safeguarding (quarterly agenda item) - **Governance meeting agenda items to be added:** ○ Continued professional development and training ○ Capacity mapping ○ Decision making matrix ○ Performance against strategic objectives and delivery plan ○ CPD Planning (only to be added once a year) ○ Staff Survey Feedback (only to be added once a year) ○ Attendance and Sickness (only to be added once a year) ○ Wellbeing plan (only to be added once a year) ○ Health and Safety (only to be added once a year) ○ Remove 'Reflections' from all further agendas	**SMT** **JC/AW** **NVR** **GW** **NH** **NVR** **NH/GW** **GW/Commissioner/ NH** **JC** **JC**