Senior Management Team Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 5 March 2025

10:00 – 13:00

via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- Nicola Vallance-Ross, Head of Corporate Services - Chair
- Ezmie McCutcheon, Head of Communications
- Nick Hobbs, Head of Advice and Investigations
- Gina Wilson, Head of Strategy
- Judith Chisholm, Executive Assistant - minutes

Guest Attendees: Jane Thornton-Smith, Finance Officer

Apologies: None

Agenda Item	Notes and actions	Action owner
1. Welcome and apologies	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies.	
2. Review of previous minutes and actions	SMT reviewed the minutes from the previous meeting and approved them subject to minor amendments. There were no actions to carry over.	
3. Finance	The Finance Officer joined the meeting for this agenda item. SMT reviewed the finance report that showed the financial position as at end of January. SMT discussed the forecasted spend within operational budgets until financial year end. SMT decided that it may need further contingency if the	

	expected spend for March materialises. Head of Corporate advised that it would be better to draw this down from SPCB funding once this has been clarified as opposed to drawing it down in advance which could result in exceeding 1/12th of operational costs at year end in bank. It was noted that in terms of the approved two year pay award from 2024 we are now moving into year two which will go into effect in April as agreed.	
4. Governance	The Head of Advice and Investigations provided an overview of the internal audit of procurement processes within legal. It went well and outcome was a substantial level of assurance around existing process. Testing was also carried out on our procurement processes, documents and all staff training which the auditor also provided substantial assurance. The internal audit of GDPR has initial meeting next week.	
5. Delivery Plan and Projects – exceptions reporting	**Strategy**: - The date for our annual Education, Children and Young People Parliamentary Committee scrutiny session is early April. As part of preparing for this we have rephased some of our delivery plan work and timelines. **Communications:** - We have new UNCRC symbols posters in different languages. We have not published these yet as we need to ensure that they meet our accessibility standards. **Advice and Investigations:** - Covid Inquiry has come back to us with further questions. Deadline 7 April. We have sought an extension. Head of Advice and	

	Investigations and Head of Strategy are having to spend a significant amount of time responding to these requests which is having an impact on delivery of other projects. - There is a possibility that aspects of the decision in the criminal case we have intervened in may be appealed to the Supreme Court. The Office is currently monitoring the situation. **Corporate Services:** - Annual leave within the team has meant lower capacity for additional work. First year that we have had multiple audits at the same time so juggling a lot of corporate services scrutiny for audit both external and internal.	
6. Participation	We have been working with the YAG on an education film and had positive sessions with them in the office and online. Film is due to be published in March. It continues to be a busy period with Young Advisors Group. They are involved in lots of work with different members of the team both in relation to our priority areas and external work. SMT discussed platforms for communications with our Young Advisors following some feedback received from the group. It was also noted the potential for new UK legislation in relation to ‘age of digital maturity’ for children and young people may affect the use of some platforms. **ACTION**: Head of Communications and Head of Strategy to consider whether to have a review on options for online collaboration with our Young Advisors during a quieter period (summer 2025). We also have external visits to schools in the diary which provide great opportunities for all of our staff to engage in participation activity.	

7. Annual Planner	SMT reviewed the annual planner for the next quarter and key dates. Noted that SMT Contribution Management Plans need to be scheduled. Those will now need to take place in April with staff team Contribution Management Plans in May. It was noted that Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion training has been scheduled for the wider staff team and a specific course for Managers Review of policies in hand. **ACTION:** Executive Assistant to review annual planner again against policy dates.	
8. Policies for Approval	SMT approved the updated Information Security and Data Breach Policy. Business Continuity Plan to be reviewed. Business Continuity plan to be put on the agenda for the Governance meeting in March 2025.	
9. Health, Safety and Welfare	Our Suite temperature is colder than previous weeks again and the issue with the heating has not yet been resolved. The Head of Corporate is concerned that the temperature is below 16 degrees and continues to request the Building Manager to take the temperature everyday. SMT decided that they will not require anyone to work from the office until issue resolved and any staff scheduling in person meetings should use the board room or other meeting rooms upstairs. If staff preference is to work from the office there are small radiators and encourage staff to bring some extra layers. **ACTION:** Head of Corporate Services to message the team.	

10. End of Meeting	12:00	
11. Date of Next Meeting	16 April 2025	
12. Matters in Private		