Governance Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 12 June 2025

14:30 – 17:00

via Microsoft Teams and in person

Attendees:
Nicola Killean – Commissioner – Chair
Nick Hobbs – Head of Legal
Nicola Vallance-Ross – Head of Corporate Services
Gina Wilson – Head of Strategy
Ezmie McCutcheon – Head of Communications
Judith Chisholm – Executive Assistant - minutes

Guest Attendees: None

Agenda Item	Notes and actions	Action owner
1. Meeting Start • Welcome and apologies (NK) • Declaration of interests (ALL) • Minutes of previous meeting and actions (ALL)	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies. No declarations of interests. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.	
2. Updates • Commissioner Update • SMT Update	**Commissioner:** - It has been a busy and productive quarter across the Office. Highlights include:	

	- the team day focussed on our delivery plan and strategy. - Our report ““This is our lives, it matters a lot.” Putting children’s rights at the heart of education” has been published. We are gathering formal responses from key duty-bearers on their plans in relation to our recommendations. - Who Cares? Scotland Report – this is due to be published soon and is a complement to our education report. - We have developed best practice examples – the support programme for head teachers in Highland and Moray and the e_Sgoil /i-Sgoil model for alternative education. - We have plans for the next phase of work on education in relation to our targeted groups and child friendly collaborative spaces. - We have visited Additional Support Needs bases when doing in person school visits. - External events in the quarter include Mental Health Foundation, Forces Children, Children in Scotland and Voicebox 2025. - There have been key meetings with the Scottish Government. We met with the First Minister, the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and the Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise. - Our Legal Officer recruitment has been launched. Challenges: - It has been an intense period of doing, reflecting and planning which has put additional pressures on SMT and the Commissioner. SMT have remained committed to delivery of projects.	

- A challenge has been waiting for the report on the SPCB Commissioner's Landscape Inquiry which is due in June.

Strategy:

- Most of the successes are the same as those highlighted by the Commissioner.
- Another highlight has been our work with the Scottish Parliament. There have been successful scrutiny sessions.
- European Network of Young Advisors – our Young Advisors Group have been preparing to participate and working on rights in relation to physical health. This work has linked back to our priority areas on poverty and mental health.
- The school visits to ASN bases have been hugely valuable.
- We held a session with our Young Advisors as a review of the year. We received really positive feedback and a couple of suggestions for improvements which we are exploring.
- Challenges are the same as those highlighted by the Commissioner.

Legal:

- Recruitment for the vacant Legal Officer post has gone live.
- Noted that the team are now called the Legal team rather than Advice and Investigations.
- COVID-Inquiry – our input to this has hopefully now been completed.
- We have taken the first case in our own name.
- A challenge has been the capacity of the team which will hopefully be filled by the recruitment process.

Corporate Services:

- It has been a really busy and productive quarter.

	- We are moving into audit period. - Information Governance project is going well. - A challenge to this project is that there have been some initial issues with capacity but this has been managed well. - Otherwise it is business as usual for this time of the year. **Media and Communications**: - It has been a really busy period. - In the last quarter we have delivered two e-Sgoil national assemblies, which thousands of children have attended. We have taken into account the feedback from children to continue to make them even more inclusive and accessible. - The assemblies have helped us form excellent connections with schools. We will continue working with these schools on other projects. - We were very pleased to see our work on BSL being highlighted in the Scottish Parliament by the British Deaf Association as a good practice example. They met with us to discuss our work including our work across our assemblies and creating videos. They are happy to help us promote our work more widely. Challenges: - As noted above by the Commissioner.	
3. Strategic Plan	**Performance against Delivery Plan:** The review focussed on the following key areas. **Capturing reactive work:** Head of Strategy noted that we capture reactive work in relation to policy requests. The external requests tracker could be developed to include coding that would capture the external requests	

	that we may like to do but do not have the capacity to. **ACTION:** Add coding to external requests tracker. Legal team capture the information on reactive work through their sifting and database system. In relation to Comms there was discussion if we had more capacity whether we could actively be looking for more opportunities to react on other media and comms relevant to our work. This is an opportunity could consider longer term. For Corporate Services if there is any reactive work in relation to Governance visible from impact on the organisation or projects and it is captured in action tracker. If the reactive work is not feasible due to capacity, delays etc then we would have a narrative for that. **Impact Framework and how developing?** No further progress since session with our Young Advisors in Spring. There will be an internal meeting in next two weeks to create a timeline. The aim is to progress it over the summer. **ACTION:** August SMT agenda to highlight the timeline and for noting when SMT likely to need to be involved. **Horizon Scanning:** - Commissioner's Landscape report due in June. There will then be a debate in Parliament on this in September. - Budget bid is due to be submitted on 1 September. **ACTION:** Executive Assistant to schedule separate focussed budget meetings for the Commissioner and SMT. - Delivery plan: finalise for year two. Consider what may carry over to year 3 and 4. - As part of horizon scanning discussed if there are ways to improve how we communicate our work on our strategic	

	priorities externally including via our website. Agreed that there are things we can do in the short term to improve this. Positive to make start this year and then look at longer-term and resources and capacity required. **ACTIONS:** Head of Comms will discuss with Social Media Officer as a project and consider reallocation of capacity. Feedback to SMT and the Commissioner on the proposal.	
4. Monitoring	**Finance:** Head of Corporate Services updated on month end to April to SMT in May. Finance is working on year-end figures. There is nothing that constitutes a change from May report that need to highlight to Governance meeting. Financial position is as expected. Agreed to ring-fence underspend in legal staffing costs for legal function. **Annual Report and Accounts Timeline:** - Timeline isn't set yet as waiting to meet new audit manager for this year. - **ACTION**: Head of Corporate Services will send key dates to Commissioner and SMT once agreed. - Audit Advisory Board meeting due to take place in first week of November. **ACTION:** Executive Assistant to set up date of Advisory Audit Board meeting. **Risk Register:** - Risk register to be updated with any major risks once confirmed from Information Governance project. **ACTION**: Head of Corporate Services	

	No other comments in relation to the risk register or mitigations. **Register of interests** – taken in private as refers to sensitive personal information. **Commissioner Code of Conduct** - Commissioner and SMT approved subject to minor edits - Agreed to prepare a short document that is child-friendly that refers to the code of conduct and what you do if would like to complain. **ACTION:** SMT meeting, end of year deadline. **Business Continuity Plan** Approved subject to minor updates. Next phase is a table-top exercise to test the plan. **ACTION:** Executive Assistant to scope out some options with the Commissioner.	
5. Annual planner	Staff Contribution Management Plans are on track and are due to be completed by the end of June. No other dates to note at this meeting.	
6. Participation	There has been a lot of great opportunities and highlights in the last quarter: Our Young Advisors have: - attended visits to schools with us. - met at the Scottish Parliament to learn about the process for developing legislation and the Bill process highlighting our Parliamentary work. - met with OFCOM about online safety - His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) consulted our Young Advisors on its work - provided us with their views on the UN's General Comment 27 on children's right to access to justice and to an effective remedy and prepared a standalone	

	response to the UN Humans Rights Councils Optional Protocol 4 to the UNCRC on the right to education We visited a school for Deaf children. They were talking and sharing the right to rest, play and relax with us. We have held 2 e-Sgoil national assemblies for primary aged children. One to celebrate UN International Day of Happiness and the other one to celebrate the UN International Day of Play. Our Comms team have worked with some of our Young Advisors including developing a blog on education, a positive story about how they feel their schools supports young people with its no shouting policy and another Young Advisor is making a film depicting a year in the life of a Young Advisor. We also worked with nursery children for our March e-Sgoil assembly and produced a film on what makes them happy.	
7. Human resources and organisational development	**CPD Planning:** - Governance group reviewed and identified mandatory and additional training needs. The majority of mandatory training is provided in-house so has no budget attached. SMT will consider budget for additional training and training identified through the Contribution Management Plan process for individual staff. **Workforce Plan:** - The Head of Corporate Services provided an overview of the Workforce plan. - Developing a Workforce Plan was an action following on from audit.	

	- Comments were received from the Governance Group in relation to some minor practical points. - **ACTION**: Workforce Plan to be added to SMT agenda in June to resolve the outstanding points.	
8. Actions review	The action log was reviewed and updates were made to status.	
12:30	**Meeting close**	