Governance Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 11 September 2025

11:30 – 12:30, 13.30-15:00

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
Judith Chisholm – Executive Assistant - minutes

Apologies: Ezmie McCutcheon – Head of Communications

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. Apologies were received from the Head of Communications. No declarations of interests. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.	
2. Actions review	The action log was reviewed and updates were made to status. Cyber-security was discussed, and it was agreed that the Group would take part in a desktop exercise in the first quarter of next year.	

3. Updates • Commissioner Update • SMT Update	**Commissioner update:** It’s been a very busy and productive quarter. Highlights include: - Who Cares? Scotland report we commissioned on care-experienced children’s experience of education. - Mental health research report - Responses from key duty-bearers to our recommendations in the education report. - Preparation for our ‘Shoogle Lab’ participatory education event. - Delivery Plan has been updated. - Staff Contribution Management Plans were all completed over the summer. - Annual Report and Accounts process is going well. - Budget submission has been made to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body. - Evidence to the UK Work and Pensions and Education Committee in relation to its Child Poverty Strategy. - Participation summer sessions – visited children and young people at the Young Carers Festival, Big Ideas Festival and youth football clubs. - Meeting with Mental Welfare Commission considering our combined priorities and complementary powers. Challenges: - SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee published its report. The report will be debated in the Scottish Parliament in September. - Capacity of the team remains a key challenge given the volume of work from project work under the delivery plan and reactive work.	

	SMT update: **Head of Legal:** Highlights include: - Our judicial review of Tribunal Rules resulting in a commitment from the Scottish Government to draft and consult on rules within a set timetable. - Our work in relation to our intervention on a case in relation to eviction of children and young people. This has involved an enormous amount of work with tight deadlines but the team have shown huge commitment. - Housing (Scotland) Bill amendments – working with the Strategy team on our response to this with the hope that we will be able to bring out of scope legislation into scope of the UNCRC Act. - Mental Health – we are working on a restraint case. Challenges: - Capacity and workload. In particular given the extent to which this is outside of our direct control in litigation. For example the need to respond to sometimes very tight deadlines from the court. Horizon scanning: - As we use our strategic litigation powers more, we are gaining increased knowledge on level of resources required to deliver, and on impact of court deadlines and responsetimes that we can use to inform future planning. **Head of Corporate Services:** - Initial feedback from Advisory Audit Board on the Annual Report and Accounts was very constructive and positive. Auditors begin the audit field work next week.	

	- Information Governance project team have an in-person meeting next week to review progress, discuss the project plan and map out next phases. - Recruitment support for the new Legal Officer post. Challenges: Include capacity planning for large projects while business as usual and external audit take place. Delays in the IT/Information Governance Project due to Service Legal Agreements. **Head of Strategy:** Highlights include: - In our role as an Independent Children's Rights Institution, we took a Young Advisor to Geneva to provide evidence to the UN Human Rights Council on Optional Protocol to the UNCRC in relation to education. This was a global first. - There has been a large volume of consultation responses submitted over the summer involving a lot of technical work. Our responses have covered all our strategic priority issues. Challenge: - there is likely to be capacity issues in the Autumn as team need to take leave following intense period of work over the summer, but Parliament will be back after recess. But this is a challenge and a highlight. Volume of work that the team were able to deliver in relation to all children's priority areas that are in our strategic plan was brilliant.	
4. Strategic Plan	**Performance against Delivery Plan:**	

	The Delivery Plan Quarterly Update had been circulated prior to the meeting. The review in the meeting focussed on whether there was anything of note that needed to be discussed. It was agreed that nothing has changed since previous meeting in terms of progress on the areas. Projects we have prioritised are on track. Areas previously agreed to deprioritise are already shown in the update. **Horizon Scanning:** - As mentioned in updates performance against the delivery plan remains linked to volume of reactive work. The Scottish Parliament's timetable between now and the election is heavy. This will impact on our ability to focus on proactive work. - **ACTION: Commissioner, Head of Strategy, Head of Legal and Head of Communications to discuss at next catch- up our position as an office on balance of proactive and reactive work ahead of election. Head of Corporate Services to be informed if any become a governance issue.**	
5. Monitoring	**Finance:** The Head of Corporate Services provided an update on financial position to end of August highlighting areas of overspend and underspend. The financial position is as expected. SMT will continue to discuss budgets at SMT meetings. **ACTION:** SMT to meet to discuss training needs against budget. **Annual Report and Accounts Timeline:** The Head of Corporate Services provided an update on timeline. Fieldwork starts next week	

	and lasts for two weeks. Advisory Audit Board has been scheduled for first week in November. **External and Internal Audit Tracker:** Reviewed this and noted any upcoming actions. In relation to internal audit recommendation of creating a formal strategic planning process it was agreed that deadline could be moved to two weeks before AAB meeting and sent out with papers. For internal audit action in relation to procurement of legal services it was agreed to meet to discuss and update on process in January 2026. **ACTION: Head of Legal, Legal Officer, Head of Corporate Services and Finance Officer to meet in January to discuss internal audit recommendation re: procurement of legal services.** In relation to external audit actions Head of Corporate Services to circulate current version of workforce plan for SMT and Commissioner to review. **ACTION: Head of Corporate Services to circulate workforce plan.** **Risk Register:** **ACTION: Head of Corporate Services to discuss with IT provider and update risk register to reflect IT and Information Governance and Cyber-Security.** No other updates or changes in relation to the risk register or mitigations. **Register of interests** – no change since last Governance meeting.	
6. Annual planner	This was reviewed and noted that: - Training – to be scheduled for individuals / team. As above, SMT to meet to agree this. - Contracts – on track. Head of Corporate Services noted that our employment law	

	insurance and subscription to access employment law and HR support is up for renewal next year. **ACTION: SMT to review at its January meeting if wish to continue with current provision of HR support or move to a different supplier.**	
7. Participation	Updates already covered elsewhere on agenda.	
8. Human resources and organisational development	**Staff survey next steps:** Matter taken in private.	
15:00	**Meeting close**	
Summary of Actions	**ACTION: Commissioner, Head of Strategy, Head of Legal and Head of Communications to discuss at next catch- up our position as an office on balance of proactive and reactive work ahead of election. Head of Corporate Services to be informed if any become a governance issue.** **ACTION: SMT to meet to discuss training needs against budget.** **.ACTION: Head of Legal, Legal Officer, Head of Corporate Services and Finance Officer to meet in January to discuss internal audit recommendation re: procurement of legal services.** **ACTION: Head of Corporate Services to circulate workforce plan.** **ACTION: SMT to review at its January meeting if wish to continue with current provision of HR support or move to a different supplier.**	**Comm, HoS, HoL, and HoC** **SMT** **HoL, LO, HoCS and FO** **HoCS** **SMT**