Senior Management Team Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 18 November 2025

14:00 – 17:00

In person and via Microsoft Teams

Attendees:

- Nicola Vallance-Ross, Head of Corporate Services - Chair
- Ezmie McCutcheon, Head of Communications
- Nick Hobbs, Head of Legal
- Judith Chisholm, Executive Assistant - minutes

Guest Attendees:

- Nicola Killean, Commissioner
- Jane Thornton-Smith, Finance Officer
- Gillian Munro, Information Officer

Apologies: Gina Wilson, Head of Strategy

Agenda Item	Notes and actions	Action owner
1. Welcome and apologies	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies from Gina Wilson, Head of Strategy.	
2. Update on IT project	The Commissioner, the Finance Officer and the Information Officer joined the meeting for this agenda item. The project team of the Head of Corporate Services, the Finance Officer and the Information Officer provided an update on the IT project covering progress and challenges. The project team shared an update to date. This is a substantial project	

	encapsulating all organisational data, IT software systems and all hardware including physical servers. Given the project is delayed due to unforeseen circumstances, it is likely that commercial contracts associated with IT, databases and other solutions will continue as normal. The project team will provide an IT update to SMT at every meeting hereafter by exception and to the Commissioner for decision making and option appraisals. The Head of Legal asked the project team about systems for new powers and the opportunity to discuss how other Public Bodies capture this data. The Project Team agreed to discuss this as a potential solution with providers. The Information Officer left the meeting.	
3. Finance	**Finance:** The Finance Officer summarised the spend up to the end of October as contained in the Finance Report. The Office is on track with budget with the exception of an underspend in staffing due to unforeseen savings on the vacant Legal Officer post which has been difficult to fill. The training and Strategy and Comms are slightly under budget to date. SMT discussed planned training for the staff complement and agreed to discuss this outside of the SMT Meeting. Noted that may be some significant spend in addition to this, and agreed that the Finance Officer will continue to review budget lines with SMT and SMT will let the Finance Officer know any specific spend that arises, for example as a result of the Office's new powers. **Audit** We received an unmodified audit opinion with full clearance and minimum recommendations. This was good news for the year 2024-25and the Head of Corporate gave thanks to the Finance Officer for their continuing commitment to the good stewardship of public funds. The Head of Corporate advised that the	

	Advisory Audit Board meeting also went well with only minor comments which are being incorporated into the actions already provided by External Audit. In terms of actions from our external and internal audit tracker those are either completed or in progress with deadlines into 2026. The Head of Corporate reminded the Senior Management Team of the dates for the next few actions including procurement of legal services and the Plan for Strategic Planning (agreed process documented). **Medium-Term Financial Plan (MtFP):** We have a draft plan which has been shared with the AAB. This is for discussion at this stage and will be tabled at SMT in January for sign off. The Head of Corporate circulated the draft MtFP and asked the SMT to review and come back with any comments prior to the January SMT. **ACTION: SMT to review draft medium-term financial plan and mark-up with any comments.** **ACTION: Head of Corporate Services to circulate most up to date version to SMT for approval for January SMT meeting.**	
4. Approval of minutes	Approved.	
5. Review of actions	Reviewed and status updated as appropriate. Actions on track.	
6. Governance	Commissioner's Code of Conduct has been signed off by the Commissioner and has been uploaded to Teams and sent to the SPCB. Internal Audit Plan was noted by SMT and cyber security audit is due to start 1/12/25.	

7. Delivery Plan and Projects Exceptions Reporting	**Exceptions reporting:** **Communications:** - Nothing to report for this meeting. **Strategy:** - Nothing to report for this meeting. SMT no update by exception for Strategy team. SMT are working with the Commissioner to plan around capacity. **Legal:** - Recruitment - unfortunately we were unable to complete the recruitment. We are evaluating next steps and impacts on work on cases during the next few months. - Police investigation – committed to but challenge of capacity. Aim is to finish before end of the financial year. **Corporate Services:** - IT and Information Governance project was delayed due to circumstances outside our control.	
8. Policies for Noting or Approval	**Young Advisors Day Rate –** SMT agreed to increase to £110 to take into account the 18% increase plus inflationary increases from April 2026.	
9. Participation	The next Young Advisors meeting is in person in Glasgow on Saturday 22 November. We are working with Laura Lundy on planning for our Shoogle Lab and we have a group of Young Advisors supporting with planning and on the day.	

	We have our next e-Sgoil national assembly that involves three of our Young Advisors including one hosting the assembly with the Commissioner.	
10. Annual Planner	SMT noted any key dates on the horizon. On track. SMT reviewed the first aiders in the staff team and those who are due a training review. It was agreed that a member of the Senior Management Team should do the training and that would be the Head of Corporate Services. **ACTION: Head of Corporate Services to complete first aid training. Finance and Admin Assistant to arrange course.**	
11. Health, Safety and Welfare	SMT noted that in terms of the health and safety the competent person for Bridgeside House is the Building Coordinator. However, the Office requires by law a competent person internally. SMT agreed that Head of Corporate Services could fill this role. **ACTION:** Executive Assistant to look for course. Head of Corporate Services to complete before end of financial year.	
12. Matters in private		
13. Date of next meeting	Next meeting: 17 December 2025	