Senior Management Team Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 26 January 2026

14:00 – 17:00

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

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. Approval of minutes	Approved.	
3. Review of actions	Action log reviewed and updated. Actions on track.	
4. Finance	SMT had a separate meeting on 21 January 2026 which covered in detail the most recent finance	

	position and budget projections. No material updates since meeting on 21 January 2026. Noted that if SMT become aware of any changes to planned operational spend for rest of financial year they should update the Head of Corporate Services. **Medium Term Financial Plan:** SMT have reviewed and provided comments to the Head of Corporate Services. Those comments have been incorporated, and it was approved by SMT. **ACTION:** Head of Corporate Services to send final draft to Commissioner for sign off.	
5. Governance	SMT reviewed a new declaration of interest from an employee. Risks and potential mitigations to be considered further before decision can be made.	
6. Delivery Plan and Projects Exceptions Reporting	**Exceptions reporting:** **Corporate Services:** **IT Project:** no options appraisal yet as scoping the project is extremely complex. Part of this is whether the software that we use is compatible and a report has been prepared based on a staff survey of software they use in their roles. The Head of Corporate Services ran through highlights from the report. If we were to go ahead with that provider it is likely we would need to think of new ways of communicating with children and young people. **Communications:** - One of Storylines project is delayed by a few weeks so instead of delivery in February it will now be March.	

	Strategy: - In the continued absence of the Head of Strategy we have an Interim Policy Manager. Policy team are moving into an extremely busy period ahead of parliamentary election. **Legal:** - Capacity remains an issue as not been able to recruit for vacant Legal Officer post. - As a result, we have taken the deliberate decision to scale back some priority work and will be presenting an options paper to Commissioner in due course.	
7. Policies for Noting or Approval	None for this meeting.	
8. Participation	Good response so far to YAG recruitment. We have made efforts to contact every school in Scotland and promote to Highlands and the Islands to try to have diverse representation of Young Advisors. As part of our work in relation to our strategic priority of education a series of visits to schools in Fife are underway for February and March.	
9. Annual Planner	SMT reviewed the planner and noted any key dates on the horizon. **ACTION:** SMT to discuss and agree rephasing dates for Contribution Management Plans for teams.	

10. Health, Safety and Welfare	No updates for this meeting.	
11. Child Protection and Safeguarding Quarterly update	The Head of Legal provided a verbal update. It has been agreed to move the detailed update to the next Governance meeting in March. Nothing significant to report for this meeting. The all staff Child Protection and Safeguarding refresher training took place in November.	
12. Staff training and development quarterly update	SMT reviewed the training budget and agreed training for SMT.	
13. Private session	The Commissioner joined the meeting for this agenda item.	
14. Date of next meeting	Next meeting: February 2025	