Governance Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 9 December 2025

14:00 – 17:00

Online meeting

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

Apologies: Gina Wilson – Head of Strategy

Guest Attendees: Gillian Munro, Information Officer item– Impact Framework agenda item

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 Strategy. No declarations of interests. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.	
2. Updates • Commissioner Update	**Commissioner update:** Highlights:	

• SMT Update	- Extensive engagement with children and young people in the last quarter including our Young Advisors, around 4000 primary aged children via our e-Sgoil national assembly, a programme of visits to children who live in a remote area of Scotland and engagement with those that are furthest away from their rights through our Storylines project. - We received an unmodified audit opinion with full clearance and minimum recommendations. We published our annual report. - The Commissioner has taken the decision to move to a 35-hour working week by March 2026 and this has been communicated to the staff team. - Mental health– the legal team have received commitments from the Scottish Government to update its code of practice for children and young people. - UK Government announcement that it will remove the two- child limit in relation to Universal Credit. This is an action that the Office has repeatedly called for over a number of years. - Shoogle Lab – amazing team effort with input from our young advisors and external consultants. Challenges: - capacity remains an ongoing issue due to staff absence and based on the need to balance reactive work versus delivery plan work. **SMT update:** **Head of Legal:** Highlights: - Progress in Mental health work – update as mentioned by the Commissioner	

	- COVID Inquiry – evidence session went really well. Enormous amount of work over a long period so good to bring to a positive conclusion. - Eviction case – this is at its end point and been a lot of work especially over last few weeks. Judgment is due. Challenges: - Capacity remains an issue as unable to recruit for the vacant Legal Officer post. Planning work in terms of how respond to that and a potential model for delivering litigation function in future. **Head of Corporate Services:** Highlights: - Positive and productive quarter. Updates from Corporate Services covered by other items on the agenda. Challenges: - capacity planning for large projects while business as usual. Delays in the IT/Information Governance Project. Provided detailed update to Senior Management Team and will continue to track the project with updates at each SMT meeting. **Head of Comms:** Highlights include: - e-Sgoil national assembly – estimated that 4000 children attended. It has been really positive in that it has also incorporated feedback in relation to accessibility. We worked with a deaf musician alongside Solar Bear. The BSL interpreter provided excellent feedback and was really pleased to be part of something accessible for children.	

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<tr><td></td><td>- Positive feedback from participants and will continue to build on that.

Challenge:

- capacity as mentioned above.</td><td></td></tr>
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<tr><td>3. Strategic Plan</td><td>Impact Framework Progress update

The Information Officer joined the meeting for this agenda item to provide an update on the development of the new impact framework. This is being designed with children and young people as an alternative approach to enhance the reporting on impact of and the external scrutiny of the Commissioner’s work.

ACTION: Commissioner and SMT to discuss update and agree on next steps for developing Impact Framework. Those to then be shared and agreed with Information Officer.

Performance against Delivery Plan:

SMT and Commissioner reviewed status. Due to capacity it was noted that there may be more updates to be made which team members haven’t had opportunity to add yet.

ACTION: Head of Corporate Services to recirculate Delivery Plan Quarterly Update to teams with a reminder to add the date at the end of it so clear when notes made. Deadline second week of January.

Horizon Scanning:

- To consider any parts of delivery plan that may need to shift from next quarter to future delivery plan.
- Noted planning in Legal Team as a result of being unable to recruit for the vacant Legal Officer post.</td><td></td></tr>
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	- Year 3 and 4 delivery plan – recognised that due to capacity this is unlikely to be ready for March 2026. Priority was delivery of work in Year 2 of delivery plan to end of work. Work on updated delivery plan for years 3 and 4 to be postponed for April and May to align with the start of the new Parliament. - Election: noted that we are technically not covered by purdah but as an Office we have previously taken the approach to respect it.	
4. Monitoring	**Finance:** The Head of Corporate Services provided an update on the draft financial position to financial year end highlighting areas of overspend and underspend and if underspend whether we should surrender funds to the SPCB. We have a staff underspend of around £70k due to savings from not being able to recruit for the vacant legal officer post. Strategy budget is around £10k underspent and the Legal budget is around £23k underspent. Specific areas discussed: **IT hardware** –approved additional spend to purchase some new laptops due to staff issues with tech. **ACTION:** SMT to ask their teams if any issues with tech and to notify Head of Corporate Services **Strategy budget** –planning to commission another storyline and need additional participation clothing. Agreed to retain the funds in the Strategy budget to cover that spend. **ACTION**: Finance and Administration Officer to do audit of participation clothing and order new clothing as required.	

	Legal budget – planned spend of around £23k for the New Year that would require the remaining legal budget. Agreed to retain legal budget. Noted that due to circumstances outside our control it is unlikely that we will spend the recruitment savings from the vacant Legal Officer post but we may need some of it for unanticipated legal work. Agreed to surrender £60k, the majority of the recruitment savings to the SPCB. Retain balance in case of unanticipated work and SMT keep spend under review and make adjustments in the New Year as required. **ACTION:** Head of Corporate Services to contact SPCB about potential surrender of funds. **Internal Audit Report – Cyber Security:** We have a draft report from the internal auditors. It found a strong level of awareness, good practice points and sets out three low grade actions. This is a positive result. The next internal audit in relation to Human Resources is scheduled for the 12 January 2026. **External and Internal Audit Tracker:** Reviewed and noted actions to be completed before end of next financial year. **ACTION:** SMT to review audit tracker on agenda of January meeting. Noted that we will provide the Advisory Audit Board with a simplified version. We need to provide evidence to the AAB for completed actions. **Risk Register:** This has been updated to reflect the increased risk from evolving phishing techniques. It was noted that SMT could review succession planning and capacity in terms of risk. Head of Corporate	

	Services is meeting with AAB member informally to discuss risk and how record. **ACTION:** SMT to consider succession planning and capacity in terms of risk and mitigation at January meeting. **Register of interests:** Noted updates to register. **ACTION:** Head of Corporate Services to circulate full register of interests and mitigations to SMT and Commissioner. **Health and Safety for unanticipated visitors to Bridgeside House** Agreed that SMT should have a formal procedure on how to respond to in person drop-in visits for advice given the increased amount of these and recognising we are not a first line support for advice as an organisation. **ACTION:** draft of procedure for unanticipated visitors to be circulated by Head of Corporate Services and put on SMT agenda for January.	
5. Annual planner	Reviewed and agreed that on track.	
6. Participation	Updates already covered elsewhere on agenda.	
7. Human resources and organisational development	**Training and Training Budget 2025-2026** Agreed that SMT and the Commissioner would do cyber-security desktop mid-March. Noted that a number of the team have expressed an interest in Excel training. Discussed team away days for each of the different teams. **ACTION**: SMT to agree a per person per head budget for any away days to ensure fairness. **Shorter Working Week**	

	Since the last Governance meeting, a business case has been agreed by the Commissioner to move to a 35-hour working week from March 2026. The decision has been communicated to the team together with FAQs. Line managers will be discussing the move individually with staff members as part of 1:1s.	
8. Review of actions from previous meeting	All completed or on track.	
17:00	**Meeting close**	
Summary of Actions from meeting	1. Commissioner and SMT to discuss update and agree on next steps for developing Impact Framework. Those to then be shared and agreed with Information Officer. 2. Head of Corporate Services to recirculate Delivery Plan Quarterly Update to teams with a reminder to add the date at the end of it so clear when notes made. Deadline second week of January. 3. SMT to ask their teams if any issues with tech and to notify Head of Corporate Services 4. Finance and Administration Officer to do audit of participation clothing and order new clothing as required. 5. Head of Corporate Services to contact SPCB about potential surrender of funds. 6. SMT to review audit tracker on agenda of January meeting. 7. SMT to consider succession planning and capacity in terms of risk and mitigation at January meeting.	

	8. Head of Corporate Services to circulate full register of interests and mitigations to SMT and Commissioner. 9. Draft of procedure for unanticipated visitors to be circulated by Head of Corporate Services and put on SMT agenda for January. 10. SMT to agree a per person per head budget for any away days to ensure fairness.	