Governance Meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 3 March 2026

09:30 – 12:30

Hybrid meeting

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

Apologies: Nick Hobbs – Head of Legal

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) • Review of actions (ALL)	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Nick Hobbs, Head of Legal. No declarations of interests. Minutes from the previous meeting were approved. Reviewed actions from last meeting and the majority are complete. Noted that: - Succession planning for SMT is a longer term action. This will be covered under discussion of risk register. - Procedure for unanticipated visitors to the office – policy in draft but needs input from the Building Manager. Plan is to take this	

	- to SMT in April for review. Revised timeline agreed. - Cyber-security desktop exercise training for Governance group – agreed to try to schedule this for before the end of August.	
2. Updates • Commissioner Update • SMT Update	**Commissioner update:** Highlights: - The quarter has focussed on delivering work required before the end of the Parliamentary term. For example, in relation to the Restraint and Seclusion in Schools (Scotland) Bill, Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill and Children (Withdrawal from Religious Education and Amendment of UNCRC Compatibility Duty) (Scotland) Bill. - We have had extensive engagement with Parliament and the Scottish Government including the Minister for Children and Young People and The Promise, and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. - One of the focusses of our engagement has been our strategic priority of education and challenging duty-bearers to demonstrate that they are ensuring there is meaningful involvement of children and young people in their work. - We are meeting with key stakeholders in relation to the scope of a project on mental health for the new delivery plan. - The annual scrutiny session with the SPCB was a positive engagement at which the Commissioner was able to highlight the numerous successes of using the offices new legal powers. - We continue with our extensive programme of participation with children and young people including those who are furthest from their rights: examples include	

	a session with Young Carers, Gaelic school visit, and a programme of visits to schools in Fife. We also had a film premiere event with children and young people from Children Health Scotland to showcase the education experiences film they have created with us. - Overall it has been a positive quarter despite challenges that test the resilience of any organisation particularly a small organisation. Challenges: - Capacity: this continues to be a challenge particularly as we approach the end of our 2024 – 26 delivery plan and are completing lots of work. - It has proved challenging to engage with the Child Poverty Delivery Plan. We have been asked for our input by Scottish Government at very short notice which hasn't provided sufficient time. **SMT update:** **Head of Strategy:** Highlights: - Head of Strategy thanked everyone for the work that has been done to cover and pick up an incredible volume of work over the last quarter. The strategy team have worked very hard to cover and they have done a great job. Challenges - The team have ongoing capacity issues due to one long-term absence, which impacts on delivery.	

	Head of Corporate Services: Highlights: - Outcome and actions from external and internal audits. - Discussion of the contract for internal audit and plan for 2026/27 - Finance – there has been a lot of work around re-budgeting and phasing. - We have sourced new IT equipment. - All of our operational work. - Budget decisions – our budget for 2026/27 has been approved. - Working with legal team to support the review around decisions for capacity and staffing and recruitment in terms of legal powers. - Participation involvement, including supporting the recruitment of our new Young Advisors. - Corporate Services are doing Project Management training. Once this has settled in plan is to review as a team and then try to mainstream Project Management tools and techniques across the organisation. - Finance training from a member of the Advisory Audit Board. - Risk register improvements. - Providing extensive corporate support across the organisation for other functions. Challenges: - Workloads - Internal Audit Scheduling **Head of Comms:** Highlights include: o Two storylines film projects are almost complete to highlight experiences of children with health conditions within education	

	- In discussions with another alternative education provision and other organisations to see if we can do a storyline with them. - The second e-sgoil of the school year is in April. Discrimination is the theme. - YAG recruitment has been the largest response we've ever had. We have recruited a diverse group of Young Advisors. - Training this quarter for the team has been positive in terms of CPD and CMP. - Involvement in participation sessions. There have been lots more opportunities for the team. - We were really pleased that our office was selected to be a good practice example for our work with the British Deaf Association Scotland and the BSL National Plan for public bodies and local authorities. This related to our support of young presenters for our BSL adverts and our use of BSL in online assemblies. Challenge: - Capacity due to one long-term absence in small team..–	
3. Strategic Plan	**Performance against Delivery Plan:** SMT and Commissioner reviewed status. All teams have provided updates. Couple of things to note as will be slightly delayed beyond this delivery plan: - Impact framework – decision to align this with work for updating delivery plan for years 3 and 4 - Staff survey – decision to include in year 3 of delivery plan.	

	- Delivery plan for years 3 and 4 – agreed postpone working on this until April and May in light of election and that work ongoing until end March to complete delivery plan year 1 and 2. Aim for completion of new delivery plan end May, beginning of June. Head of Strategy provided an update on plans to develop a framework structure to monitor our progress that would include the impact framework, delivery plan and an action tracker and how those fit together. Head of Strategy will bring to SMT and Commissioner for review. Once an approach is approved then go out to teams for input on work they are doing and how that fits. **ACTIONS:** - Head of Strategy share plans for framework structure with Commissioner and SMT. - Commissioner and SMT meet to determine process for updating delivery plan and get an initial sense of what think would work well for whole team and individual teams as part of the process. - Time as a whole organisation to be put in for April and /or May so team clear on process, roles and responsibilities and how framework works together. **Horizon Scanning:** Three key things: - **Election**: there will be a lot of new MSPs and parties. Agreed that need to factor in relationship building / influencing as well as considering training and support for team for doing this. **ACTION:** SMT at March meeting to consider plans for a programme for support / training for staff in relation to relationship building / influencing.	

	- **Capacity within Legal Function**: aim is for options and decisions to be taken by the end of March. - **Information Governance Project**: need to factor in other activities to ensure time and capacity not only to deliver but for impact on rest of team.	
4. Monitoring	**Finance:** - SMT reviewed finances in detail in February. - Year-end calculations – nothing for decision at this meeting as detailed reports already reviewed by SMT. Nothing new to report for this meeting. - Ending this year's finances with a surrender to SPCB that has been signed off by SMT and the Commissioner. - 2026/27 budget approved by the SPCB. Working on phasing and tallying it up to pay deal with budget once agreed. **Internal Audit Report:** - **Cyber Security:** outcome good and as expected. Table-top exercise for Governance group to be scheduled in by end of August. Team are completing cyber-security online modules. If two or more modules have been missed for a significant period of time then Corporate Services will flag this to line manager. **ACTION**: Commissioner and Head of Corporate Services to discuss progress on review of structure of internal audit at a Corporate Services catch-up before deadline for AAB papers. - **HR Performance**: good outcome and highlighted good practices.	

	- Main recommendation is that the Contribution Management Process and 1:1sare consistently implemented and recorded in accordance with a documented process. Agreed that those conversations are happening in line with our values but not a consistent process across the organisation. - **ACTION:** agreed that create a monitoring process and/or tools for 1:1s and CMPs for each employee including members of SMT. Head of Corporate Services and Commissioner to develop. - **ACTION:** SMT to agree an updated 1:1 framework in relation to content and consistency at SMT meeting in either March or April. Commissioner to join SMT for discussion of that agenda item. To consider if internal or external input in terms of training focused on purpose of effective use of 1:1s would add value for SMT and whole team. **External and Internal Audit Tracker:** Reviewed and noted actions are up to date. SMT reviewed in detail at its February meeting. Head of Corporate Services noted that the procurement for legal services recommendation is not being implemented due to development of that function and the auditors have accepted that. **Risk Register:** The Governance Group reviewed the risk register and agreed that it captures the main risks of the organisation. The Group identified a few actions that may need to be updated in light of mitigations that are in place and / or to reflect current work. **ACTION:** SMT to review risks that they own with their Teams.	

	Head of Corporate Services noted that there is a piece of work happening in relation to continuous risk management and improvements. There is also work on a new form of risk register. **ACTION:** Head of Corporate Services to arrange meeting with SMT to discuss and agree on our risk appetite. This will lead to a risk appetite statement for the Commissioner, which might also change risk mitigations. **Register of interests:** Noted agreed update to register.	
5. Annual planner	Reviewed and agreed that all on track. A few points to note: - Confirmed that SMT have agreed to complete team members Contribution Management Plans by the end of March. - Delivery plan drafting agreed to move to April and May. - Cyber-essentials is via a testing process. Done annually. Cyber-insurance is provided as part of wider insurance.	
6. Participation	All really positive. Updates already covered elsewhere on agenda.	
7. Child Protection and Safeguarding Annual Update	Excellent paper and provides a good level of assurance on our work in this area. Update has been provided in draft and Head of Strategy to follow up with Child Protection and Safeguarding Officer on any next steps. Final report will go to SMT. **ACTION:** Head of Strategy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Officer to meet to discuss review of policy.	
8. Health and Safety Annual Update	Paper provided a good level of assurance.	

	Paper contains a few recommendations and conclusions for some improvements on how we report, what we class as health and safety and some potential training for the team. Governance Group agreed the recommendations. **ACTION:** SMT to agree next steps and staff training following recommendations from health and safety paper and provide an update on progress to Governance Group meeting in June.	
9. Human resources and organisational development	**Training budget:** moving into new financial year so new conversations in terms of individual or wider team training. SMT take the training as an update at meeting. Staff training discussed as potential in this meeting: - Relationship building / influencing - 1:1 process – understanding of purpose - Mental Health First Aid Need to have conversation at SMT following CMP discussions. Mindful of time that it takes to source training. **35 hour working week:** - Business Decision approved by SMT and the Commissioner recording the work to implement the transition. - Meetings happened with all staff in advance of move. - Looking at minor tweaks / improvements to trial assistance tools and techniques to improve efficiency. Otherwise no major concerns raised.	
12:30	**Meeting close**	
Summary of Actions from meeting	1. Head of Strategy share plans for framework structure with Commissioner and SMT. a. Commissioner and SMT meet to determine workplan and get an initial	

	sense of what think would work well for teams and individual roles. b. Time as a whole organisation to be put in for April and /or May so team clear on roles and responsibilities and how framework works together. 2. SMT at March meeting to consider plans for a programme for support / training for staff in relation to relationship building / influencing. 3. Commissioner and Head of Corporate Services to discuss progress on recommendations from internal audits at a Corporate Services catch-up before deadline for AAB papers. 4. Create a monitoring process and tools for 1:1s and CMPs for each employee including members of SMT. Head of Corporate Services and Commissioner to develop. 5. SMT to agree an updated 1:1 framework in relation to content and consistency at SMT meeting in either March or April. Commissioner to join SMT for discussion of that agenda item. To consider if like internal or external input in terms of training and support around that either for team to understand purpose or support for SMT. 6. SMT to review risks that they own on risk register with their Teams. 7. Head of Corporate Services and the Commissioner to meet to review those risks identified at meeting in risk register in more detail and update register if required. 8. Head of Corporate Services to arrange meeting with SMT to discuss and agree on our risk appetite. This will lead to a risk appetite	

	statement for the Commissioner, which might also change risk mitigations. 9. Head of Strategy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Officer to meet to discuss final version of update paper and review of policy. 10. SMT to agree next steps and staff training following recommendations from health and safety paper and provide an update on progress to Governance Group meeting in June.	