

MINUTE

Meeting date: **Tuesday 21 January 2025**

IN ATTENDANCE ONLINE

- Helen Donaldson (Chair)
- Lezley Stewart
- Lorna Johnston, Executive Director & Accountable Officer
- Sarah Nicholson, Office Manager
- Gillian McCreddie, Audit Manager, Audit Scotland
- Liz Maconachie, Senior Audit manager, Audit Scotland
- Andy Munro, Head of Internal Audit, Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB)

ITEM	CONTENT	ACTION
STANDING ITEMS		
1.	<p>WELCOME, APOLOGIES and DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Ms Donaldson welcomed all attendees.</p> <p>No declarations of interest were made.</p>	
2.	<p>DRAFT MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>The draft minutes of the meeting on 23 July 2024 were approved.</p>	
3.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>The Committee noted that all matters arising had been completed.</p>	
BUSINESS ITEMS		
4.	<p>RISK REGISTER 2024/25</p> <p>The Committee reviewed the contents of the Risk Register for 2024/25 and agreed to recommend to the Standards Commission that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The probability score for risk two (“Education”) be reduced from a 3 to a 2, with the overall score decreasing from 9 to 6, in light of the work undertaken to date (including the new information published on the website) and given it is likely only a few more Hearings will be scheduled to take place before the year end. • The probability score for risk three (“Stakeholders”) be reduced from a 2 to a 1, with the overall score decreasing from 8 to 4, in light of the engagement undertaken to date. • The probability score for risk four (“Training”) be reduced from a 3 to a 1, with the overall score decreasing from 9 to 3, in light of the amendments made to the existing educational material and the training events provided. • The overall score for risk five (“Decision-Making”) remains at 8, given the quality of investigation reports and how cases are presented at Hearings are outwith the Standards Commission’s control but can have a significant effect on its ability to make sound and fair decisions. • The probability score for risk six (“Service Users”) be reduced from a 3 to a 2, with the overall score decreasing from 9 to 6, in light of the improvements made to the website and engagement undertaken to date. • The overall score for risk seven (“Budget”) remains at 8, given it is not known whether the Standards Commission will be able to recover the expenses due in respect of the unsuccessful appeal on LA/S/3867 before the year end. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The impact score for risk eight (“Availability”) be reduced from a 4 to a 3, with the overall score decreasing from 8 to 6. This is because while a change to Member or staff availability (such as medium to long term sickness absence) or a sudden influx of cases remains entirely possible, overall impact on whether the organisation could achieve its aims for the year would be less significant, given the work already undertaken. <p>The Committee asked the Executive Team to make the proposed amendments, via track changes, for consideration by the Standards Commission at its meeting on 27 January 2025.</p> <p>The Committee noted that a draft Risk Register for 2025/26 would be circulated by email in due course for approval. It was noted that, if necessary, all members could discuss this at their Training and Development session scheduled to take place on 24 February 2025.</p>	Executive Team
5.	<p>ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2024/25 – EXTERNAL AUDIT Annual Audit Plan and Audit Fee</p> <p>Ms Maconachie noted that the draft Annual Audit Plan had been circulated to the Committee for review. Ms Maconachie advised that the audit timetable would be similar to the previous year, with the Standards Commission’s annual accounts being signed off in July 2025. Dates for the audit work with Audit Scotland had been agreed with the Executive Team.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the proposed annual audit fee had not yet been issued by Audit Scotland. The Committee asked the Executive Team to forward details of the proposed audit fee on receipt.</p>	Executive Team
6.	<p>INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES Internal Audit Plan 2024/25</p> <p>The Internal Auditor advised that, following discussions with the Executive Director, he was proposing the subject of the internal audit should be on how the Standards Commission conducted Hearings, with a focus on providing assurance that the controls and actions documented in the Hearing Rules and Guidance can be evidenced.</p> <p>The Committee agreed with the proposal and noted that the audit would not only review the current process, but would also ensure any improvements that could be made, to ensure best practice was achieved, could be identified.</p> <p>The Internal Auditor advised that, following confirmation that the Standards Commission agreed with the proposal, he would prepare a scoping document for approval. The draft report will be presented to the Committee at the next meeting in May 2025.</p>	
ANY OTHER BUSINESS		
7.	<p>UPDATE ON 2025/26 BUDGET BID</p> <p>The Office Manger provided an update on the 2025/26 budget bid process. The Office Manager advised that it was expected that the budget would be approved in February or March 2025.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the Executive Director and Officeholder Services held their quarterly governance meeting on 12 November 2024.</p>	
8.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS None.</p>	
NEXT MEETING		
9.	<p>The Committee noted that it was next scheduled to meet online on Tuesday, 20 May 2025.</p>	