



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Minute of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) meeting held on Thursday 21 March 2024 at 9.00am

## Present:

- Alison Johnstone MSP (chair)
- Claire Baker MSP
- Jackson Carlaw MSP
- Maggie Chapman MSP
- Christine Grahame MSP

## In attendance:

- David McGill
- Janice Crerar
- Becky Thomson, Helen Birrell
- Mairi Pearson, Peter Walker
- Lorna Foreman
- Huw Williams
- Eric MacLeod
- Jennifer Griffin
- Lisa Creamer
- Judith Proudfoot, Secretary

## Previous minutes

1. The SPCB agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 7 and 14 March 2024.

## Matters arising

2. The SPCB noted that the following item had been agreed by correspondence since the previous meeting:
  - SPCB (2024) Paper 22: parliamentary travel to North America.

## **Meeting with the Scottish Information Commissioner**

3. As the funder of officeholders, the SPCB instigated a series of meetings to engage with individual officeholders on an annual basis. The SPCB welcomed David Hamilton, the Scottish Information Commissioner, to the meeting.
4. The discussion with the Commissioner covered a range of areas including: the steps he had taken since taking up office in October 2023 to address the inherited case backlog; the successful outcomes of interventions undertaken with bodies to improve their approach to dealing with requests; and resourcing pressures.
5. The SPCB thanked the Commissioner for his attendance.

## **Meeting with the Children and Young People Commissioner for Scotland**

6. The SPCB welcomed the Commissioner, Nicola Killean, to the meeting. Having also taken up the role relatively recently in August 2023, the SPCB welcomed the Commissioner's comments on the steady transition into the role assisted by the existing highly skilled and experienced team.
7. The discussion covered a range of areas including: the main challenges facing children and young people in Scotland and what role the office of the Commissioner plays in helping to address them; the impact of the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law; the challenges of engaging those who do not usually engage; and the 'Young Advisors' - a group of young people who support and shape the Commissioner's work.
8. The SPCB thanked the Commissioner for her attendance.

## **Officeholder strategic Plans – SPCB (2024) Paper 23**

9. Officeholders have a statutory duty to lay Strategic Plans before the Parliament for each 4-year period setting out how they will perform their functions. Before a plan can be laid, the officeholders must provide a draft of their plan and invite comments from the SPCB and any other body or person the officeholder considers appropriate, including a committee of the Parliament.

10. The SPCB discussed the Strategic Plans submitted by the Scottish Information Commissioner and the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland. The SPCB noted that both Commissioners had faced significant challenges during the early stages of their appointment and welcomed the positive progress made.

11. The SPCB noted the Plans.

## **Chief Executive's Report**

12. The Clerk/Chief Executive presented his regular report, highlighting a number of items including:

- The induction programme provided for the newest MSP Tom Eagle.
- The heavy parliamentary business workload, including the high volume of legislation coming through committees.
- The Quarter 3 finance, performance and workforce reports.

13. The SPCB noted the Report.

## **Security – SPCB (2024) Paper 24**

14. The SPCB agreed a request for security works at a Member's constituency office.

## **Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme: Edinburgh Accommodation Allowance – SPCB (2024) Paper 25**

15. In December 2023, Parliament passed legislation which gave powers to local councils to determine any increases to council tax for properties that are second homes. The Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2023 would come into force on 1 April 2024. One effect was to provide a power for local authorities to increase the amount of council tax payable on second homes. This would have implications for MSPs who rented flats in Edinburgh in line with the terms of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme.

16. The SPCB discussed the budgetary implications and agreed to support affected Members by increasing the Edinburgh Accommodation Provision limit for each Member currently eligible and who had a flat. The increase would equate to the amount of each individual's additional premium for each financial year for the remainder of the current session.

17. The matter would be included as part of the remit for the upcoming sessional review of the Scheme.

## **SPS staff pay negotiations – SPCB (2024) Paper 26**

18. The SPCB agreed a remit for pay negotiations for 2024-25.

## **AOB**

19. The SPCB noted its appreciation for the contribution made by Huw Williams to the work of the Scottish Parliament during his 25 years with the organisation, and before that as a member of the Bill team working on the Scotland Act 1998.

## **Date of next meeting**

20. The next meeting of the SPCB was scheduled for 18 April 2024.

**SPCB Secretariat**  
March 2024