

Officeholders – strategic plans

30 January 2020

Reference: SPCB(2020)Paper 4

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider the draft strategic plans for 2020-2024 received from-
 - (a) the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland,
 - (b) the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman,
 - (c) the Standards Commission for Scotland, and
 - (d) the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland.
2. The Plans are attached in Annexes A to D.
3. The draft Strategic Plans of the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Scottish Information Commissioner will follow for consideration at a later meeting.

Background

4. The 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.
5. The officeholders have been laying plans before the Parliament since 2010. The draft plans cover the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2024. Each plan is required to set out (a) the objectives and priorities for the 4-year period, (b) how they will be achieved, (c) a timetable and (d) estimates of the costs.

Officeholders' Draft Strategic Plans

The Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland

6. The Commissioner's role is to promote and safeguard the rights of children and young people. Bruce Adamson is the Children's Commissioner. He was appointed in 2017 and his current Strategic Plan covers the period 2018 to 2020.

7. The Commissioner worked with children and young people to inform his new Strategic Plan which builds on the previous plan. He worked with a Young Adviser's Group, ran workshops and events across Scotland and created a survey to hear children and young people's views on what his office should work on for the next 4 years.
8. The Commissioner has 2 Strategic Priorities-

Priority 1 Nurture a culture of children and young people's human rights in Scotland, and

Priority 2 Make sure that children and young people's human rights are at the centre of law, policies and practice.

9. Below each of the priorities are six descriptors which provide information on what the office intends to do to achieve its aims including for example under Priority 1, that they will make sure children and young people and adults know about and understand children's human rights and under Priority 2, review and address public bodies' compliance with their human rights obligations to children.
10. Estimated costs have been included in the plan. The Commissioner mentions that he will review financial spend in light of the shared services agenda to provide where practicable, best value.
11. **The SPCB is invited to consider the Commissioner's draft Strategic Plan.**

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

12. The Ombudsman's role is to investigate complaints about most organisations providing public services in Scotland where a member of the public claims to have suffered injustice or hardship as a result of maladministration or service failure. The Ombudsman is also the independent reviewer of the Scottish Welfare Fund and with effect from July 2020 will also be the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer for the NHS. Rosemary

Agnew is the Ombudsman. She was appointed in 2017 and her current Strategic Plan covers the period 2017 to 2020.

13. The Ombudsman's draft plan has 4 Strategic Themes –
 - Accessibility
 - Access to justice
 - Capability
 - Standards

14. Under each theme are a number of strategic objectives and how the Ombudsman will measure success. There are 13 strategic objectives. For example, under the theme '*Accessibility*' one of the objectives is to make the Ombudsman's services as accessible as they can be. Success will be measured by the Ombudsman being able to take a complaint in any format.
15. The Ombudsman will report achievement through her Annual Report and Accounts and other reporting mechanisms.
16. For the purposes of the draft plan, the baseline budget used is the 2020/21 budget on the basis it is the minimum required to deliver their statutory functions to the current levels. The Ombudsman mentions that the biggest strategic and operational risk is inadequate funding but recognises that funding for all public services is stretched and that they have to strive constantly for efficiency.
17. **The SPCB is invited to consider the Ombudsman's draft Strategic Plan.**

Standards Commission for Scotland

18. The Commission's role is to encourage high ethical standards in public life. It promotes and enforces the Codes of Conduct for Councillors and Members of Devolved Public Bodies and issues guidance to councils and devolved public bodies. The Commission adjudicates on cases of alleged contravention of the Codes of Conduct referred to it by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland, and on finding a contravention it has statutory powers to impose sanctions. It has a part-time Convener and 4 part-time members.
19. The Commission's plan builds on the achievements and progress made during the period of the previous plan (2016-2020). The Commission remains focused on enforcing compliance with the Codes of Conduct and promoting the ethical standards framework to assist councillors and members of devolved public bodies to achieve the highest ethical standards. The draft plan outlines the Commission's vision and values and outlines how it will measure success.
20. The Commission has 4 high level Strategic Aims-
 - Impact
 - Improvement
 - Stakeholders
 - Clarity

21. The Commission intends to pursue opportunities to reduce both costs and its carbon footprint and will use technology and digital communications to help it work in the most efficient and environmentally friendly way.
22. The estimated costs included in the plan are in line with those submitted as part of the 2020 budget approval process. The Commission is a demand-led organisation and the indicative costs are based on its current workload and remit etc.
23. **The SPCB is invited to consider the Commission's draft Strategic Plan.**

Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland

24. The Commissioner investigates complaints about the conduct of Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), local authority councillors and members of public bodies and about non-compliance with the lobbying regime and also regulates how people are appointed to the boards of public bodies in Scotland. Caroline Anderson is the Commissioner. She was appointed on 1 April 2019 and during 2019 she restructured her office.
25. The Commissioner's draft Strategic Plan has 4 objectives-
 - Assuring ethical excellence through delivery of a high-quality complaints handling service,
 - Evolution and maturity as a regulator, responsive to contextual and scope change,
 - Developing a talented professional team to further drive quality, and
 - Creating an effective information governance system designed to support our business needs.
26. Beneath each of the 4 objectives are three measurable goals. The Commissioner will report on progress through her Annual Report and Accounts, governance report and other reporting mechanisms.
27. The estimated costs included in the plan are in line with those submitted as part of the 2020 budget approval process. The Commissioner's office is a demand-led organisation and the indicative costs are based on its current workload and existing remit etc. The Commissioner recognises public sector resources are limited and will review and scrutinise the services she provides to ensure best value and continuous improvement.

28. **The SPCB is invited to consider the Commissioner's draft Strategic Plan.**

Resource Implications

29. The estimated costs in the draft plans are indicative and are included for illustrative purposes only. The SPCB commenting on a draft plan does not guarantee future funding and we make this clear when we reply to the officeholders providing any comments or confirming that we have none to make. The officeholders' budgets are subject to annual approval by the SPCB.

Governance issues

30. Seeking comments from the SPCB prior to the laying of a strategic plan is a statutory requirement. The officeholders have until the end of March 2020 to lay their plans

Publication Scheme

31. This paper may be published.

Decision

32. The SPCB is invited to consider and provide any comments of the draft Strategic Plans of the-

- (a) the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland,
- (b) the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman,
- (c) the Standards Commission for Scotland, and
- (d) the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland

Officeholder Services