

Note

Meeting Date	<p>Wednesday 24 September 2025, 10:30 – 12:00</p> <p>In person: Bridgeside House, 99 McDonald Road, Edinburgh, EH7 4NS</p>
Board	<p>David Watt, Chair</p> <p>Siobhan White</p> <p>Steve Renwick</p>
Attendees	<p>External Auditor – Audit Scotland: Tommy Yule</p> <p>External Auditor – Audit Scotland: Neil Maclean</p> <p>Acting Ombudsman - Andrew Crawford</p> <p>Head of Corporate and Shared Services – Stuart Crickmar</p> <p>Head of Investigations (PSC) – Judy Saddler</p> <p>Head of Investigations (INWO/SWF) – Elaine Cameron</p> <p>Corporate Services Manager - Fiona Paterson (note taker)</p>
Observer	<p>Incoming Chair – Joe Al-Gharabally</p> <p>Team Manager (SWF) – Alison Jack</p>
Apologies	<p>Internal Auditor – WBG</p>



Item	Subject	Main points of discussion	Actions agreed	Due	Lead
1.	Welcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies. The Chair introduced the next AAB Chair, who was in attendance to meet the Management Team. 2. The Chair noted the imminent handover from the Acting Ombudsman to the Ombudsman in October. The Acting Ombudsman thanked the Chair for the strong governance assurance he had provided the organisation as the longest serving member of the SPSO AAB. 3. The AAB and External Auditors agreed to a private meeting after the open meeting had concluded. 4. The AAB reviewed the AAB Annual report, and discussed the presentation of events throughout the paper. The Chair agreed to the minor amendments and would resubmit the final report for publication. 	Review draft AAB report and finalise for publication	Oct 25	Chair
2.	Declarations of Interest	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There were no additional matters for declaration, other than already noted on the published Declarations of Interest. 			
3.	Previous notes, outstanding action points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The previous two notes and outstanding actions were reviewed. 2. HoCSS updated the AAB on the finalising of the draft workforce plan, with input from the Ombudsman once he takes up post in October. 	Finalised Workforce Plan	Mar 26	HoCSS
4.	Financial report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The HoCSS drew attention to the three parts to the finance paper covering the three financial years, and provided further context to each. 	Target payment performance	Mar 26	CSM



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		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="539 309 1550 416">2. The 2024-25 outturn was within tolerance levels, and the detail is covered more fully in the external audit agenda item, which includes the SPSO 2024-25 Annual Report and Financial Statements. <li data-bbox="539 443 1550 708">3. The HoCSS drew attention to current pressures, including sustained increases in Public Service Complaint case volumes, which impacts across the organisation. The SPCB has been alerted to the situation, however the organisation will continue to work withing the current 2025-26 budget restraints. The HoCSS noted the SPSO continue to actively look for efficiencies in all areas of the process, with the caveat that the quality of output is not compromised. <li data-bbox="539 735 1550 879">4. The 2026-27 SPSO budget bid was submitted with a small request for an increase of 0.8 FTE to address the acute pressure at the first contact point of the process, and a change of approach to the modest income generated by the Training Unit. <li data-bbox="539 906 1550 975">5. The AAB enquired about the holiday and flexi accruals, and it was clarified that the leave year begins in October. <li data-bbox="539 1002 1550 1187">6. The AAB enquired about the what may be the underlying causes of the increase in complaints and what impact that was having on staff, the Hol-PSC provided an overview of the trends and pressures experienced in her area of the organisation, noting the importance of supporting staff wellbeing. <li data-bbox="539 1214 1550 1321">7. The AAB enquired about the 10-day payment performance target, and how it could be achieved. This point will be discussed further with the finance team and provided in the next finance paper. 			



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5.	External Audit report	<p>1. The AAB noted to the meeting the SPCB project to provide a template in order to standardise the Assurance Statements provided by the Office-holders, which are reviewed at the SPCB AAB meeting.</p> <p>2. The Auditor asked the AAB and the management team if they were aware of any fraudulent activities or post balance sheet activities the AAB need to be informed of, and both the AAB and management team confirmed they were not aware of any fraud actions arising since providing their written confirmation.</p> <p>SPSO Annual Report and Accounts</p> <p>3. The Chair noted the report read well, and reflected the original comments made by the AAB on the draft document in June. The AAB noted the graphic design of the document helps to engage the reader, and shows consideration of the stakeholders.</p> <p>4. The Acting Ombudsman thanked the AAB for their input, which was valued and of great assistance.</p> <p>External Auditor's Report</p> <p>5. The External Auditor noted it was a clean audit, reflecting positively on the work done, and the Annual Report and Accounts were given an unmodified audit opinion.</p> <p>6. The Auditor walked the AAB through the details of the report, noting two non-material adjustments relating to IFS16. These were corrected in the audited accounts during field work.</p>			



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		<p>7. The AAB discussed with the Auditors the assessment of SPSO as a less complex organisation for external audit, as it is below the threshold against which this is measured.</p> <p>8. The External Auditor expressed his appreciation to the SPSO for the work done and efficiency of response to requests during audit process.</p> <p>9. The Chair expressed his thanks to the Auditors for their work and the report, and noted the AAB were content for the documents to be prepared for signing, and the Auditor’s report to be published.</p> <p>10. The Auditor confirmed the document would be prepared for signing and issuing to the Auditor General.</p>			
6.	Internal Audit report	<p>1. The HoCSS confirmed the Internal Audit activities for 2025-26 will be undertaken in Q3 and all reports presented to the AAB at the March meeting.</p> <p>2. AAB noted the importance of audit investment in cyber risk.</p>			
7.	Risk, Incident and Issues report; including Business Plan performance.	<p>1. The AAB reviewed the Strategic risk register and noted arrangements were in hand for this year. The AAB also noted the current and target risk level for cyber security was the same, however the risk is still listed as ‘treat’. This was confirmed as something that will require constant attention due to the prevalence of the risk and the resources to hand to mitigate for the risk.</p>	Provide a paper outlining the SPSO risk appetite paper for the next meeting.	Mar 26	Omb



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		2. The AAB suggested including more detail on the actions providing controls or mitigating the risk, and requested a paper outlining risk appetite for the next meeting.			
8.	AOB - Private Meeting	1. The External Auditor met with the AAB in private after the meeting closed.			

Approved for publication 10 November 2025

David Watt, Chair