

**Note of the Executive Board Meeting held on 18 December 2008**

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Present:	Alice Brown	Ombudsman
	Eric Drake	Director of Investigations
	Niki Maclean	Head of Services
	David Robb	Director of Policy and Development
In attendance:	Emma Gray	Communications & Outreach Manager
	Iain Law	Investigations Manager
	Judy Saddler	Investigations Manager
	Kathleen Steindl	Investigations Manager
	Annie White	Casework Knowledge Manager
	Fiona Paterson	Senior Personal Assistant (secretary)

Carol Neil, John Stevenson and Louise Rae joined the meeting for items 08-12-05.4 and 08-12-05.6. Louise Rae was also present for 08-12-06.1.

**Actions**

1. The meeting opened at 09:30 with no apologies.
2. The minutes from the meetings held on 29 October, 19 November and 12 December 2008 were agreed with minor amendments.
3. Action points held over from previous meetings were reviewed.

**4. Strategic Activities Update**

Parliamentary Committee – Review of SPCB Supported Bodies

SPSO written evidence will be submitted on 19 December 2008 and the Ombudsman is invited to give oral evidence to the Committee on 20 January 2009.

Ombudsman Recruitment Process

The SPCB have informed the SPSO that they will begin the recruitment process for a new Ombudsman in January. The Ombudsman will be writing to the SPCB outlining the possible risks to the SPSO that may arise during this process.

**5. Business Plan and Projects Update**

2008-09

The Board accepted the recommended adjustments to the quarterly objectives and noted the additional activities relating to strategic objective 5 not listed in the business plan.

2009-10

The Board approved the recommended process for preparing the 2009-10 Business Plan using a self-assessment tool, potentially PSIF (Public Service Improvement Framework).

5.1. SDC & Challenge to Decisions Process Review

The Board accepted the recommendation to replace the current 12 standards and commitments with the revised standards and SDC process.

The Board approved the recommended changes to the processes for implementation from 5 January 2009.

The Board approved the changes to the website pages, leaflets and forms in line with the change to processes.

The Board requested a paper with recommendations be tabled at the next EB meeting addressing the communication with listed authorities regarding the right of the complainant to challenge decisions and informing listed authorities when a challenge arises.

**AW**

**5.2. End Project Report – Scoping Training Provision**

The Board noted the paper and thanked VM for the valuable research. The Board looked forward to the full 'lessons learned' report.

**5.3. End Project Report – Annual Report 2007-08**

The Board noted the paper and paper and thanked EG for useful insights, including resource issues, that will be taken into consideration for the next Annual Report.

The Board requested that the Annual Report and Annual Letters be issued together in **EG, AW** September 2009.

The Board agreed to continue to publish the performance update in May each year.

**5.4. SPSO Training Unit**

The Board thanked CN for the detailed paper on the establishment of a training unit. The Board supported the proposal in principle and will review the start date for the unit.

Resourcing for the unit will be subject to agreement with the Management Team.

The Board requested that an initial survey letter be sent to bodies under jurisdiction to gauge take-up, followed by a pilot with Local Authorities in the first instance, working closely with the Improvement Service and Solace. **CN**

**5.5. Replacement of ICT Infrastructure and CHS**

The Board noted the update on progress towards replacing the case handling software.

**5.6. Customer Service Excellence Award and The Crystal Mark**

The Board thanked JS and EG for this paper and noted the cross-over with the proposal to use PSIF self-assessment tool.

The Board accepted in principle the importance of external validation of the organisation's customer service standards and the clarity and ease of understanding of SPSO's communications.

The Board agreed to use Crystal Mark for the website and key publications produced by the SPSO.

The Board agreed that 'plain English' standards be applied to correspondence and reports produced by the SPSO.

The Board looks forward to receiving a further paper on methods for validating customer service standards in line with development of organisation performance measures.

**6. Operational Report**

The Board requested the Investigation Managers provide recommendations for the proposal **Inv Man** to widen the timeline for KPI 2 for 2009/10 for the next meeting.

The Board agreed to incorporate jurisdictional casework workshops into Tuesday panels.

**6.1. Freedom of Information and Data Protection**

The Board thanked LR for the research on different approaches to recording and reporting on FOI and DPA requests.

The Board requested a short policy on publishing FOI information in line with the Scottish Government policy, including a review and update of existing SPSO policies and web guidance on FOI and archiving.

**LR**

The Board agreed to produce a quarterly report for internal and external purposes as proposed in the paper.

The Board requested that managers remind all staff of the importance of good file management and to be aware that notes on file would be released if requested under the FOI/DPA acts.

**Inv Man**

**7. Financial Performance**

The Board noted the current financial position and the predicted overspend and will continue to monitor the budget closely.

**8. People and Human Resources Report**

The Board noted the paper and look forward to receiving the initial feedback from the staff survey in the new year. The Board and Management Team will discuss the next steps for sharing results with staff and responding to concerns.

NM thanked all staff who were involved in the HR Audit. The full report is due in January.

**8.1. Distribution of Office Manager Duties – additional responsibility allowances: Reserved Item**

**9. Review of Risks**

The Board noted the paper outlining key risk areas and the proposal to conduct the annual review of the risk register with staff in quarter 4.

**10. AOB**

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 13:00.