

Note of the Senior Management Team Meeting held on Tuesday 9 September 2014

Present:

Jim Martin	Ombudsman (Chair)
Niki Maclean	Director
Emma Gray	Head of Policy and External Communications
Paul McFadden	Head of Complaints Standards

In attendance:

Fiona Paterson	Senior Personal Assistant (Secretary)
Rachel Nicholson	Executive Casework Officer

1. The meeting opened at 10:40 with no apologies. The note of the meeting held on 30 July 2014 was agreed with no amendments and the outstanding actions list was reviewed. The SMT noted all actions were on target for completion by the due dates.

2. Financial Monitoring Report

The SMT noted the year-to-date expenditure against budget to end July. The SMT discussed the shortfall in predicted income and possible income-generating projects that may be pursued this year and into next. The SMT also noted the application to the SPCB for contingency funds to cover unbudgeted liabilities.

3. Risk Management Report

The SMT noted the report on the 2014 facilities security audit and the continued improvement on previous years' results. The SMT were informed that the internal audit of Risk Management would be undertaken in September including meetings with all the risk owners, and the resultant report prepared for the AAC meeting in October.

4. Performance Report – Corporate Services

The SMT noted the remaining outstanding actions on the Records Management Plan and approved the draft Memorandum of Understanding with The Keeper of the Records of Scotland for the process of depositing, storing and accessing SPSO records of enduring historical, cultural and research value. This MoU will be an annex to the Retention and Disposal policy and the first deposit of identified documents will be in December 2014.

The SMT noted the ongoing ICT activities and their proposed costs.

The SMT were informed of ongoing recruitment activities for additional professional advisor support in the areas of planning and health.

5. Performance Report – Casework

The SMT discussed the casework performance year-to-date to August. The Ombudsman particularly noted the good work that has gone into achieving further 12% increase in cases closed when compared to the same period last year, although this was clouded by a 16% increase in cases received. The SMT went on to specifically discuss the progress of the four cases open over 260 days old.

The SMT noted the decrease in cases transferred from the ER Team to Investigations Team as cases are retained in ER as part of an effort to reduce the current pressure in the Investigations' open caseload. Additionally, the new CR recruit for the ER team will be providing drafting assistance to the investigations team until December. The Director noted

that the period between September and November was traditionally well staffed and this will be used by the teams to reduce the open caseload before the office closure between Christmas and New Year.

The SMT approved in principle the proposed proportionality guidance and discussed in detail the criteria and tests used to identify these cases. The next steps for finalising the guidance for staff were agreed and the SMT requested sight of the letter templates that will be used for these types of decisions. It was recommended that the closure codes for these case types be revised to enable a close monitoring of the implementation of this guidance.

6. Performance Report – Policy Group

The SMT discussed in general the annual complaint handling reports that were now being published by BUJs. The SMT also discussed the ownership and implementation of benchmarking guidance by sector networks. This came about following discussions with a BUJ who required some clarification of the guidance.

The SMT were informed that it was hoped to publish the Local Government and Health sectoral reports before the September Sounding Board meetings.

The meeting closed at 12:10