



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Minute of the Leadership Team (LT) meeting held on Monday 4 September 2023 at 09.30am, Q1.03

Present:

- David McGill (chair)
- Michelle Hegarty
- Alan Balharrie
- Susan Duffy
- Lorna Foreman
- Sara Glass
- Lynsey Hamill
- Judith Morrison
- Callum Thomson
- Tracey White

In attendance:

- Mark Brough (items 1-4)
- Phil Bassett (item 5)
- Neil Mackie, Phillipa Booth (item 6)
- Jane McEwan (item 7)
- Vicky McSherry, Helen Nicolson, Willie Heigh, Erin Borthwick (item 8)
- Huw Williams
- Erin Aitken
- Judith Proudfoot, secretary

Item 1: Previous minutes

1. LT agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 28 August 2023.

Item 2: Matters arising

2. Michelle noted that the discussion on strategic use of space under NWoW at the previous meeting had not fully achieved the aim and confirmed that time had been allocated at the October meeting for a further discussion.

Item 3: Intelligence sharing

3. LT noted updates on the following:
 - The Scottish Government's consultation on its Electoral Reform Bill which had recently concluded. The Bill was scheduled to be introduced in the Parliament in

January 2024 with Stage 2 possibly being taken before the summer recess. The SPCB would continue to be briefed on aspects of the Bill that impacted on its responsibilities.

- The UK Retained EU Law Bill.
- The Digital and Data Reform Bill. This would have implications for the SPCB and Parliamentary Service; Members and their staff; and officeholders supported by the SPCB. Legal Office and Information Management Group were working together to scope the impact and resource required to adapt operations to ensure continued compliance and consider opportunities to improve processes and service to Members.
- Following coverage of the issues around 'Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete', it was confirmed that this type of concrete was not present in the Scottish Parliament building.
- The scope of the new creche service license awarded by the Care Inspectorate.
- Progress with work around the gender sensitivity audit and scrutiny.

Item 4: SPCB forward look

4. LT noted a brief overview of the programme for the upcoming SPCB planning meeting.

Item 5: Cyber security briefing

5. Phil Bassett attended the meeting to provide LT with an update on recent cyber security activity and the ongoing work of the BIT office to protect the Parliament's systems. LT noted that BIT was working with Resilience colleagues as part of the wider resilience planning and that this would be brought back to LT for discussion at a future meeting.

Action: Phil, Tommy

6. LT noted that the policy on use of IT was being updated. LT also noted that there was an on-line training package already available – Stay safe on-line – and agreed that this should be mandatory for all users of the parliamentary network. LT agreed that communications should be prepared for Group Heads (GHds) to enable them to update their staff on these matters.

Action: Phil, GHds

Item 6: Diversity & Inclusion

7. An audit had been undertaken to assess progress on the organisation's inclusion maturity to help identify any steps needed to achieve the strategic aims. LT received a presentation on the outcomes of the assessment and welcomed the positive findings. A document mapping the recommendations to the People & Culture Strategy would be circulated after the meeting.
8. There were a number of themes identified in the report that were already known having been highlighted through previous surveys and engagement with staff. LT noted the action plan already in place to address some of these. In particular, LT discussed the

processes in place around recruitment and shared some examples of where diversity and inclusion had been improved by changing the approach to selection criteria.

9. Neil and Phillipa would be arranging 1 to 1 discussions with GHds about those recommendations specific to their respective business areas. It was agreed that Neil and Phillipa would come back to LT for a further discussion after those GHd meetings and that this would include a look at what other organisations, who were assessed as being at a higher level of maturity for an inclusive culture, were doing differently and the investment/change required.

Action: Neil, Phillipa

Item 7: Parliament Communications Office

10. LT welcomed a presentation from the Head of the Parliament Communications Office which provided an overview of the structure and role of the Office and set out how its staff worked with and supported colleagues across the organisation. Areas covered included proactive and reactive liaison with the media; management of the Parliament's social media presence; and communicating directly with the public via the website and/or paper copy.
11. LT raised the frequent frustration felt by staff at headlines referring to 'Holyrood' when the article was actually about the Scottish Government. There was an acceptance that this would continue but the Parliament Communications Office, along with Outreach Services and other offices, would continue to promote the difference between the Parliament and the Government through their various outlets.

Item 8: Quarter 1 reports

Finance report – Paper 18

12. A small overall underspend against the year to date budget was reported and LT had a detailed discussion around the current 'vacancy gap' target and budget projections.
13. The vacancy gap target is an established aspect of the staffing budget. Based on LT feedback on recruitment and retention challenges a pay reform exercise for SPS was completed in 2022/23. This was a feature of the successful pay negotiations for SPS. Acknowledging the significant uplift of £3.3 million to the SPS staffing budget following the strategic resourcing review, and the commitment to maintaining this baseline until the end of session 6, it was agreed that the vacancy gap could support pay reform. Following further analysis the vacancy gap target was increased accordingly. In the year to date, staff turnover was at the lowest levels seen in many years and recruitment times and security clearance times were significantly shorter than previous years leading to shorter durations of vacancies. Whilst this was all positive, it was resulting in lower levels of vacancies and shorter duration of vacancies than forecast (and compared to prior years) therefore placing strain on the staffing budget. In addition, there had been unexpected staffing increases or profile of staffing in specific groups resulting in additional budgetary pressure.

14. GHds were reminded of their responsibility for contributing to the collective management of the annual vacancy gap target, There were a range of issues which could be addressed to ensure the vacancy gap target was met. LT agreed a number of actions aimed at managing the vacancy gap in line with the 2023-24 budget:

- As per the email issued to LT in June, discretion on using staffing budget as per delegations is suspended.
- GHds to have conversations with their Teams on the importance of managing the VG target.
- People Services team to work up proposal for recruitment timelines, differentiating between critical roles & others.
- GH Digital Services to address BIT's reliance on day rate contractors/agency to fill some roles.
- Review the current request to fill (RTF) process.
- Review Groups/Teams with greatest resourcing pressures and work with Group Heads to identify and put in place resourcing plans to meet needs.
- People Services to implement a recruitment service catalogue to manage the process for requisitioning support with recruiting to a vacancy.
- Note that no further change to periods of notice beyond LT at this time.

15. LT noted that we had now substantively established the new staffing complement post the strategic resourcing review and that this was positive. At this time other options to address the vacancy gap target were not being progressed but this would be kept under review

Action: All

Workforce report – Paper 19

16. LT welcomed the positive report in terms of turnover and absence levels which reflected a stable workforce. LT was particularly pleased to note the significant increase in the number of applicants from ethnic minority candidates for recent recruitment campaigns, many of which were for IT positions.

17. People Services were asked to look further into long term absence causes as part of the next report.

Action: Vicky

Performance report – Paper 17

18. GHds provided updates on those activities being reported as status 'red'. It was also highlighted that there were a significant number of milestones being reported as due up to the end of the year and the question was raised as to whether these were adequately resourced, especially those activities which involved multiple business areas. GHds were asked to reflect on these milestones and liaise with Willie and Erin on any changes prior to the next quarterly report.

Action: GHds

Date of next meeting

19. The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 2 October 2023.

LT secretariat
September 2023