

**SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL**

**Unconfirmed minutes of the Council meeting  
held on 25 March 2024 at 10.00am at Compass House and by Teams meeting**

**Present:** Sandra Campbell, Convener, Council Member  
Edel Harris, Council Member  
Rona King, Council Member  
Lindsay MacDonald, Council Member  
Doug Moodie, Council Member  
Peter Murray, Council Member

**In Attendance:** Maree Allison, Interim Chief Executive  
Hannah Coleman, Acting Director of Regulation  
Laura Lamb, Acting Director of Workforce, Education and Standards (online)  
Laura Shepherd, Director of Strategy and Performance  
John Begg, Interim Head of Finance (online)  
Anne Stewart, Head of Legal and Corporate Governance  
Audrey Wallace, Corporate Governance Coordinator

**Observers:** there were 8 observers

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and apologies</b>
1.1	The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting.
1.2	Apologies were intimated on behalf of Council Members, Theresa Allison, Alan Baird, Sharon Ballingall and Julie Grace.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
2.1	There were no declarations of interest.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Draft Budget 2024/25 and indicative budgets 2025/26 and 2026/27</b>
3.1	Laura Shepherd presented report 12/2024 seeking Council's approval of the 2024/25 budget. She outlined the changes made since the draft budget was submitted to Council in February. These included a reduction of the funding deficit, an increase in the general reserve now at 4.5% which is above the target percentage, possible changes to the pension contributions by the organisation (no difference to staff contributions) which will be reduced from 17% to 15.7% resulting in a possible decrease in the spending pressure.
3.2	Laura Shepherd explained some of the challenges in producing the budget, including unknown final income from registration fees which is

	partially linked to the way in which fees from Local Authorities are calculated. There are changes to vacancy management figures which will be increased on a trial basis from 4% to 5.5%. She also advised on small shifts in the cost of various digital projects.
3.3	Laura Shepherd confirmed that the grant in aid confirmation letter from Scottish Government had not yet been received but it will be received before the end of this financial year. She confirmed that there were no spending targets set for Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) except that they were expected to improve outcomes under the Public Sector Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.
3.4	Laura Shepherd then spoke to the changes in the operation of shared services which resulted in budget savings. John Begg outlined ways in which finance staff manage work in each of the SSSC and Care Inspectorate to provide the complete service.
3.5	Laura Shepherd confirmed the temporary staffing figures provided and explained that some staff are not yet recruited and their employment would start as of June 2024. She also confirmed that there is a 3% pay uplift included within the calculations. She confirmed that any costs for 2025/26 are indicative at this stage and more accurate figures will be presented to Council next year for budget approval.
3.6	Members were concerned about the lack of formal letter of grant in aid from Scottish Government and wished their dissatisfaction to be recorded and conveyed to Scottish Government. John Begg explained that the slight delay was largely due to the IFRS 16 and how it would be applied to the organisation.
3.7	Other matters discussed included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the additional work required to process fees which are paid by Local Authorities with no compensation for the additional work</li> <li>• acceptance that all NDPBs work with a spending pressure</li> <li>• we have few inflationary uplifts as most of the costs are known</li> <li>• there is no contingency as we use the general reserve if needed</li> <li>• look at the process for future to try to reduce the underspend and overspend figures and it was noted that more accurate figures will be available once the Future Proofing Programme is launched</li> <li>• look into more accurate methods of calculating registration fees income</li> <li>• Scottish Government has not adversely commented on the change to the shared services agreement</li> <li>• vacancy management will be reported through the quarterly Assurance Report</li> <li>• digital services are procured through the Scottish Government Framework</li> <li>• General Reserves may be needed for legal services.</li> </ul>
3.8	The Council
	1. approved the budget for 2024/25.

<b>4.</b>	<b>Care Experience report 2024-2026 and Children's Rights Reports 2026/27</b>
4.1	Laura Shepherd presented report 13/2024, which had appended the draft Care Experience Report 2024-2026 and the Children's Rights Report 2023. The SSSC has a statutory duty to report on how we promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
4.2	Main highlights in the Care Experience report were around supporting vulnerable fitness to practice witnesses, embedding trauma informed practice within our work, exploring 10 years of childcare workforce data and supporting The Promise. The report includes a comprehensive action plan based on the outcomes which support the SSSC's statutory responsibilities.
4.3	The Childrens Rights report focusses on our progress towards fulfilling the nine clusters of the UNCRC articles. Our actions include providing updated guidance on safer recruitment, setting up the National Directory of Continuous Professional Learning for the Early Learning and Childcare Workforce and our achievement of the silver award from Investors in Young People (IiYP).
4.4	Members noted that progress of a number of measurable actions would be reported through the assurance reports, providing scrutiny of their effectiveness. They also noted that trauma informed practice extended to staff and Fitness to Practice (FtP) panel members and throughout the work of FtP.
4.5	The Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. endorsed the progress made to achieving our duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014</li> <li>2. approved both reports for publication</li> <li>3. commended officers on the reports and also on being awarded the silver IiYP award.</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Independent review of inspection scrutiny and regulation (IRISR)</b>
5.1	Maree Allison presented report 14/2024, which included details of the SSSC's activity in response to the acceptance by Scottish Government of the recommendations from the IRISR. Maree Allison outlined the outcomes particularly relevant to the work of the SSSC, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regulation of Personal Assistants (PAs), which was not a recommendation at the present time</li> <li>• care service types and definitions</li> <li>• review of health and social care standards.</li> </ul> Doug Moodie commented that Social Work England had already carried out work on the latter.
5.2	Laura Lamb confirmed that the IRISR report was available and taken into account while the Codes of Practice were being reviewed.

5.3	Maree Allison advised that she is attending an upcoming strategic liaison meeting with Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser (OCSWA) where these outcomes and the SSSC's work will be discussed. This will include how we build improvements and actions into our monitoring as well as how we provide assurance that we are making as many improvements as are possible. Laua Shepherd commented that the progress of actions could significantly change how the budget will look in the coming years especially for example if the SSSC is to regulate other social sector workers.
5.4	Council then discussed Market Research including vacancy rates, funding for registration and qualifications. It was noted that we had already carried out some work on this as the IRISR report had been available for some time. Maree Allison confirmed that the SSSC holds a lot of data which will be useful in looking at market oversight.
5.5	The Council
	1. noted the update on the IRISR and the SSSC's activities.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Date of next meeting – 23 May 2024 at 10.00 am</b>
6.1	The next meeting scheduled for the Council is 23 May 2024. This meeting will be in hybrid format.

Council started: 10am  
Council finished: 11:50am

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Sandra Campbell  
Convener

Date \_\_\_\_\_