

**SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL**

**Unconfirmed minutes of the Council meeting  
held on 26 February 2024 at 10.00am in Tay Room Compass House, Dundee  
and by Teams meeting**

**Present:** Sandra Campbell, Convener, Council Member  
Theresa Allison, Council Member (online)  
Alan Baird, Council Member  
Sharon Ballingall, 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  
Laura Shepherd, Director of Strategy and Performance  
John Begg, Interim Head of Finance (for item 12 only)  
Anne Stewart, Head of Legal and Corporate Governance  
Audrey Wallace, Corporate Governance Coordinator

**Observers:** there were 18 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 Julie Grace. It was noted that Theresa Allison would join online, slightly after the start time.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of interest</b>
2.1	There were no declarations of interest for the public session of the meeting.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting – 23 November 2023</b>
3.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 23 November were approved as a correct record subject to an addition to item 2 to say there were no declarations of interest for items 3 to 8 and 10 to 15.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Matters arising</b>
4.1	Maree Allison confirmed that there were discussions planned between herself and the Chief Executive of the Care Inspectorate and the matter

	of the numbers of supervisors of services who remained unqualified will be one point of discussion.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Conveners report</b>
5.1	Sandra Campbell presented her quarterly report 01/2024 which provided a summary of her activities as Convener, since the last quarterly meeting of the Council in November 2023. She highlighted that she and the Interim Chief Executive had met with the Minister earlier in the month and some of the matters discussed then will be addressed later in this meeting.
5.2	The Council
	1. noted the report.
<b>6.</b>	<b>Chief Executive's report</b>
6.1	Maree Allison presented her report 02/2024, her main highlights being the budget, registration fees and workforce qualifications. She advised that the Minister had expressed a wish to meet on a more regular basis, which is welcomed. Maree Allison also reported on the achievement of the silver award in Investors in Young People and being on track to retain the gold award in Investors in People.
6.2	Maree Allison addressed the Future Proofing Programme which she advised would be the major focus of work over the coming months. The online events to the sector were already fully subscribed and further places have been added. Should these also be fully subscribed, further events will be scheduled. Communication to the sector is key to the launch of the programme.
6.3	In other news she advised that a pay offer had been made to staff and the union had balloted its members.
6.4	Main areas of discussion arising from the report are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the cost to the SSSC of continuing to be part of the Investors in people Scheme? In terms of value for money and restricted budgets we must look at all expenses.</li> <li>• Laura Lamb advised that the positive effect from the Integrated Health and Social Care Award would mean that workers in both health and social care settings would achieve the same award and allow better integration of the health and social care workforce.</li> <li>• The work on cyber resilience was commended.</li> <li>• The research carried out into the economic and social value of Adult Social Care (ASC) in the UK was expected to be shared with other bodies to show the positive benefit of ASC. It is UK wide research and includes both social and economic benefits on a UK and country specific basis.</li> </ul>
6.5	The Council
	1. noted the information contained in the report.

<b>7.</b>	<b>Audit and Assurance report to Council</b>
7.1	Alan Baird presented report 03/2024, the Audit and Assurance Committee report to Council, following the committee meeting on 1 February 2024. He highlighted the main matters discussed and mentioned particularly the uncertainty over the future budget and the risk of, as yet unknown, costs.
7.2	He referred to the audit report on Internal Workforce Planning – Management Information which gave a good level of assurance, with only one recommendation. He advised the Council of the discussion which took place on the governance review of the rewards review and also on the internal audit plan for the year 2024-25, which was approved.
7.3	Alan Baird asked the Council to approve the Risk Register and Risk Appetite Statement both of which had been presented to the Committee for its approval and onward recommendation to Council.
7.4	<p>The Council</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. accepted that the assurance report presented a true and fair view of the SSSCs performance towards achievement of strategic objectives, financial management and risk identification and management. In particular that <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. operational performance as measured by strategic key performance indicators give confidence that the SSSC is delivering as forecasted to meet strategic objectives agreed with the Sponsor Department</li> <li>b. financial performance is consistent with forecasted spend and this does not present concern relating to year-end outturn of approved budget</li> <li>c. operational delivery and financial expenditure are consistent</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. approved the revised Risk Register and the revised Risk Appetite Statement, effective from 1 April 2024 (at Appendices 2 and 3 of the report)</li> <li>3. noted <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the Committee approved the draft internal audit plan for 2024/25</li> <li>b. the Committee approved the remit for the review of the rewards review project subject to some changes to discussions with Members and inclusion of matters raised by the Committee</li> <li>c. the recently appointed Members Sharon Ballingall and Edel Harris observed the meeting.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Future Proofing Programme - Update</b>
8.1	Hannah Coleman presented report 04/2024, which provided a full update on the Future Proofing Programme, which started back in February 2021. She advised that the programme is planned to be fully live by 3 June 2024, subject to required legislative changes being

	made. Three Statutory Instruments require to be amended for the programme to go fully live. The report also contained a number of appendices and background papers to assist Members in obtaining the fullest of information at this update.
8.2	<p>Hannah Coleman referred to the following matters, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the new structure of the Register reducing the register parts from 23 to 4</li> <li>• reduced time to apply for registration</li> <li>• introduction of annual declaration rather than current periods of registration</li> <li>• required systems changes, which are all on track</li> <li>• amended continuous professional learning requirements</li> <li>• introduction of requirements for social workers returning to practice</li> <li>• reduced timescales for obtaining qualifications</li> <li>• revised Codes of Practice</li> <li>• scoping of new register groups.</li> </ul>
8.3	<p>Hannah Coleman further advised on the governance of the programme and the various reviews and audit which had been built into the programme. She also advised on the budget for the programme confirming that a budget of £1.1million was approved by the Scottish Government. She clarified that the profile of the budget had changed and the expected spend on systems had increased whereas the spend on staffing had decreased.</p>
8.4	<p>Members commented on the thorough and positive update. The following queries were raised and addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new website for Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) will provide guidance and helpful information and will link into the main SSSC website. Members will see a demonstration of this at their development session in March.</li> <li>• It was clarified that the SSSC, as regulator, decides on mandatory training following consultation with stakeholders.</li> <li>• There is a risk register for FPP, but the full strategic register will be reviewed by the Executive Management Team in light of FPP.</li> <li>• Registration for the online information events for workers will be closely monitored and if required further dates will be added.</li> <li>• FAQs on the website will be monitored and updated regularly.</li> <li>• Digital systems are penetration tested every six months and new systems will follow the same level of testing.</li> </ul>
8.5	<p>The Council</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. noted the contents of the report.</li> </ol>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Revised Codes of Practice</b>
9.1	<p>Laura Lamb presented report 05/2024, on the process and methodology used to draft the revised Codes of Practice. The final draft version was appended to the report and Council was asked for approval before it is submitted to Scottish Government.</p>

9.2	Members congratulated all involved in the review and commended the revised language used as well as inclusion of reference to trauma, relationship-based support and thoughtfulness.
9.3	Maree Allison clarified the position of the Care Inspectorate in that it is a stakeholder and therefore involved in the consultation process. Doug Moodie confirmed that due process had been followed and the final draft now presented was acceptable. It is not the place of the Care Inspectorate to endorse the Codes. Maree Allison also confirmed that the SSSC has no powers of enforcement in respect of the Employer's Code, these already exist within the Care Inspectorate and to also give these to the SSSC would be duplication and result in confusion over the role of each body.
9.4	Laura Lamb confirmed that there are benchmarks and measures in place to be able to assess, over time, the benefits brought about by the revised codes. She also advised that the SSSC worked with its partners and Scottish Government to ensure that other regulatory bodies were working to a similar level of robust practice and were sufficiently aligned to ensure a similar level of care throughout the sector.
9.5	Maree Allison confirmed that the tentative date for the ministerial launch of the revised codes on 7 May 2024.
9.6	The Council
	1. approved the final draft of the Codes of Practice for submission to Scottish Government.
<b>10.</b>	<b>Qualifications for Adult Social Care (ASC) – Timescale</b>
10.1	Laura Lamb presented report 06/2024. She referred to the report brought to Council in November 2023 when Members requested that further information be brought to this meeting in order to make an informed decision. She reiterated the reasons for the request to delay the introduction of the three-year timeframe to qualifying for those in ASC. She confirmed that the next pressure point for qualifying is 2027/28 when those granted extensions over the pandemic were expected to complete qualifications. Laura Lamb added, in addition to relieving the pressure of the high turnover and high vacancy rate, delaying the start date for the three-year timeline would mean that the new time frame would not add to the pressures to be felt in 2027/28. Members noted that, currently, the SSSC may grant extensions to students on an individual basis.
10.2	Maree Allison advised that although the SSSC has the power to grant extensions on an individual basis for particular circumstances it is not an appropriate approach to manage the circumstances set out in this report. She further advised that it would be unwise to delay any decision further. Communications to the workforce on changes brought about by the FPP are imminent, and this included changes to qualification timeframes.

10.3	Laura Lamb clarified that the proposed date to commence with the three-year timeframe for workers in ASC was now June 2025, a year after the slight delay to the introduction of the FPP. On being asked, she advised that of 50% of those asked stated this shortened timeframe would cause some difficulties and of these approximately half said it would cause much more difficulty and half said it would cause a little more difficulty.
10.4	On being asked if there is a link between workers leaving the sector and having to gain qualifications, Laura Lamb advised that the leaver survey to be launched in March would provide this detail. Currently it is widely said that the gaining of qualifications/not having time to attain qualifications was a cause of the retention issues in the sector.
10.5	The main points of further discussion centred around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the inability of services to release staff for study as they had insufficient staff cover and insufficient funding</li> <li>• agency staff would need to be sought to infill vacant shifts</li> <li>• qualified workers tend to stay longer in the sector</li> <li>• while there are other challenges in the sector, it is in the gift of the SSSC to provide support to the sector for this issue</li> <li>• delay in the introduction of the three-year timeframe will give employers space to carry out workforce planning and source funding to allow workers time to study</li> <li>• the three-year timeframe will still be brought in, but a year later than first agreed</li> <li>• if we do not extend and the workforce can't obtain qualifications in the time we will be faced with removing thousands of workers from the register or will be tasked with processing individual extensions,</li> <li>• concern that the issues in the ASC sector will not be resolved by June 2025 and further time will be requested</li> <li>• confirmed that there are sufficient assessors to carry out training, but no capacity to release staff into training</li> <li>• there could be a risk that the SSSC is seen to be endorsing unqualified staff by allowing this to be delayed by another year.</li> </ul>
10.6	Laura Lamb confirmed that there is now support from other partners and Scottish Government to help relieve the staffing crisis in ASC.
	<i>Council recessed for a short period to take advice on how best to proceed in accordance with standing orders in the case where there was no consensus and no alternative to the recommendation.</i>
10.7	There being no consensus of opinion and there being no amendment or alternative motion put, the Council went to a vote.
10.8	Council voted on the following: to approve the delay of the reduced timescale for registered workers in housing support, care at home and care homes for adults to gain the required qualification for registration until June 2025.
10.9	Council voted five for the recommendation and four against the recommendation. The recommendation was approved.

10.10	Members expressed some concern about the voting process followed, ie not being aware that an alternative could have been put forward. They also expressed concern that a similar situation in ASC would be brought back to Council in a year's time. Laura Lamb advised that she will bring back a report to Council in August 2024 with relative data which will be available following the launch of FPP and this will assist in early determination of the position within the ASC sector.
	<i>Theresa Allison declared a connection to the following item as she employs staff registered with the SSSC. After a brief recess to take advice, there were no further declarations or connections intimated.</i>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Review of Registration Fees</b>
11.1	Maree Allison presented report 07/2024 which provided an overview of SSSC fees levels and of other regulatory bodies. The report contained the consultation proposal to review our registration fees. She referred to the report submitted in November 2023, the additional information requested was now presented. Maree Allison also advised on a revised timeline for consultation and any increase. Given that the FPP will be launched imminently, it is important that communication to the workforce is concentrated on the FPP. Consultation on fees would detract from the important messages being sent out to the workforce. She suggested therefore that consultation, if approved, would take place in early autumn and a report on the outcome would come to Council in November 2024, to allow systems changes in time for April 2025.
11.2	Members and officers discussed the financial sustainability of the SSSC and the outcome of discussions that the Convener and Interim Chief Executive had held with the Minister. The main issues discussed were <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Minister did not appear to favour a large increase, eg to provide financial sustainability.</li> <li>• At least 40% of workers have their fees paid by their employer.</li> <li>• A figure of 5% annual increase was loosely based on average inflation/cost of living increases.</li> <li>• Could an annual increase instead be linked to Consumer Price Index (CPI), Retail Price Index (RPI) or inflation rather than set it at a fixed percentage?</li> <li>• Annual increase amount should be agreed otherwise each annual increase would require a rule change.</li> <li>• Noted that had the fees been reviewed in 2020 this would have reduced the spending pressure.</li> <li>• Consultation would ask for comments on proposed changes to fee levels.</li> <li>• There is a ministerial expectation that fees be increased regularly in small amounts, in line with general cost of living increases.</li> </ul>
11.3	The Council
	1. approved consulting on reviewing registration fees with a report on the outcome of the consultation to come to Council in November 2024.

	<i>John Begg, interim Head of Finance joined the meeting for the following item</i>
<b>12.</b>	<b>Draft Budget 2024/2025 and indicative budgets for 2025/26 and 2026/27</b>
12.1	Laura Shepherd presented report 08/2024 the draft budget for 2024/25, for comment. Members noted that Scottish Government has agreed to fund the deficit of £3.6 million as a funding pressure. Members also noted that the projected year end general reserve will be £608k, which is within the target range. Laura Shepherd advised that any increased income from fees is not included within the figures.
12.2	Some details on staffing was discussed including the reduction in Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts, the employment of temporary staff and why these were employed in temporary positions. Laura Shepherd advised that risk assessments were carried out where temporary posts rather than permanent posts were suggested.
12.3	Maree Allison advised on the increased spending in Digital, largely due to the FPP which will bring in efficiencies and benefits.
12.4	John Begg assured Members that all pensions and lease and depreciation costs were included within the budget figures presented.
12.5	The Council 1. considered and commented on the draft 2024/25 budget.
<b>13.</b>	<b>People Management Policies</b>
13.1	Laura Lamb presented report 09/2024 which included the revised Disciplinary Policy and revised Whistleblowing Policy. She advised that there were minor changes to each to language and to provide clarity.
13.2	The Council 1. approved the updated Disciplinary Policy 2. approved the updated Whistleblowing Policy.
<b>14.</b>	<b>Council Action Record</b>
14.1	Members reviewed the Council action record and noted that actions C18, C23/28 and C23/29 were completed and should be archived for future reference.
<b>15.</b>	<b>Date of next meeting and Calendar of Business</b>
15.1	The Committee noted the calendar of business for the year. It also noted that the next meeting scheduled for the Council is Monday 25 March 2024, primarily to approve the budget. The next meeting for scheduled business is Thursday 23 May 2024.



Council started: 10am  
Council finished: 2pm

Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Sandra Campbell  
Convener of the Council

Date\_\_\_\_\_