

SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

Unconfirmed minutes of the public session of the Council meeting held on 23 May 2024 at 10.00am in Compass House, Dundee and by Teams meeting

Present: Sandra Campbell, Convener, Council Member
Alan Baird, Council Member
Sharon Ballingall, Council Member
Edel Harris, Council Member (online)
Rona King, Council Member
Lindsay MacDonald, Council Member (online)
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
Anne Stewart, Head of Legal and Corporate Governance
Audrey Wallace, Corporate Governance Coordinator

Observers: there were 12 observers

1.	Welcome and apologies
1.1	The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting.
1.2	Apologies were intimated on behalf of Theresa Allison and Doug Moodie.
2.	Declarations of interest
2.1	There were no declarations of interest for items on the public session agenda.
3.	Minutes of the previous meetings
	Minutes of 26 February 2024
3.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2024 were approved as an accurate record.
	Minutes of 25 March 2024
3.2	The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2024 were approved as an accurate record.
4.	Matters arising
4.1	There were no matters arising from the previous minutes that were not included on the agenda for the meeting.

5.	Convener's report
5.1	Sandra Campbell gave a verbal update on her activities as Convener since the last quarterly meeting of the Council. She advised that her time had been largely used to progress recruitment for the vacant Council Member posts we will have this year. She is also working on recruitment to the Chief Executive post which is currently filled on an interim basis by Maree Allison. She advised briefly on the processes for each.
5.2	Sandra Campbell then advised that Sharon Ballingall had agreed to be appointed to the Future Proofing Programme Sponsor Group. This appointment will run until end of November 2024, when the work of the Group will be completed.
5.3	The Council 1. noted the updates 2. approved the appointment of Sharon Ballingall to the Future Proofing Programme Sponsor Group.
6.	Chief Executive's report
6.1	Maree Allison presented report 16/2024, the key points she brought out were the launch of the Future Proofing Programme (FPP), the progress of the National Care Service Bill (NCS) and the meetings of Chief Executives of Health and Social Care Regulators and Alliance of Social Work Regulators.
6.2	Maree Allison confirmed that the Minister and the Chief Executive of the Care Inspectorate had attended the ministerial launch of the revised Codes of Practice and this took place at an early years' service in Edinburgh. She also referred to the success of the online events for employers and workers which were held in the lead up to the launch of the FPP.
6.3	Maree Allison advised that the Interim Head of Finance would leave the post at the end of June and that the permanent post had now been filled with the successful candidate starting the week commencing 27 May 2024. Additionally, she advised that Laura Shepherd, the Director of Strategy and Performance, had successfully achieved her BA certificate from Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). Members congratulated Laura Shepherd on this achievement.
6.4	Members congratulated all officers involved in the FPP adding that this was an example of good project management and cross departmental working.
6.5	Laura Lamb advised Members on some aspects of the NCS, including discussions with Scottish Government about accountability and matters of delegated authority. She confirmed that the National Social Work Agency (NSWA) will set up a shadow board in spring 2025 and further details are expected to be known in autumn this year. She advised that through her work in the various discussion groups she feeds into the

	digital health and social care strategy and can raise concerns about how changes will affect recipients of services.
6.6	The Council noted the information in the report and the verbal updates.
7.	Audit and Assurance Committee report to Council
7.1	Alan Baird presented report 17/2024, the Audit and Assurance Committee's quarterly report to Council which also included the Committee's Annual report to Council for approval. He highlighted the reduced budget deficit, the positive internal audit reports received throughout the year and the progress with the counter fraud work and revision of the counter fraud framework. Alan Baird commended officers for their diligence throughout the year which has led to the positive reports and positive relationship with auditors, Henderson Loggie, and especially the work with David Archibald.
7.2	Sandra Campbell confirmed that a deep dive discussion session on risk is included within the schedule of business for the development session on 27 June 2024.
7.3	The Council
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. accepted that the assurance report presents 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"> 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 b. financial performance is consistent with forecasted spend and this does not present concern relating to year-end outturn of approved budget c. operational delivery and financial expenditure are consistent 2. approved the Committee's Annual Report to Council at Appendix 4 to the report 3. noted the Committee approved <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. extensions to the time allowed for completion of three audit recommendations b. the draft external audit planning report for 2023/24 c. the revised Financial Regulations and Debt Management Policy d. the Draft Annual Governance Statement for inclusion in the Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/24.
	<i>There was a brief break for a digital issue to be resolved</i>
8.	Information Governance Annual Report
8.1	Anne Stewart presented report 18/2024 which provided information on how the SSSC had performed over the year on data protection, freedom of information and records management legislation. She

	advised Members on plans for improving records management, involving the review of the structure of digital record keeping.
8.2	On data security, Anne Stewart confirmed that we record data security breaches, security incidents and 'near misses.'
8.3	The Council
	1. endorsed the organisation's performance in information governance compliance in the 2023/24 financial year.
9.	Qualified Status of the workforce
9.1	<p>Following previous discussions at Council regarding concerns about the qualified status of the workforce, Laura Lamb presented report 19/2024. The report provided some analysis of the data we hold on the qualified status of the workforce on the various parts of the Register. It also included an action plan setting out planned actions to increase numbers of qualified workers and details of agencies, other than ourselves, who would be required to take action on the plan. The report states that there are a number of workers not due to be qualified, under their registration conditions, as they only entered the register within the last five years. Laura Lamb confirmed that Council will receive reports every six months and will therefore be able to monitor the progress being made with the plan to increase numbers of qualified workers.</p>
9.2	<p>Members raised a number of points, issues and questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alan Baird reminded Members that the risks associated with this matter are the subject of a deep dive at the development session in June 2024. He added that we need to think about what we can do to make a sector change to avoid a crisis in social care; how do we get the commitment from the sector, which is evident in childcare but not in adult social care (ASC). • Maree Allison cautioned against comparing ASC data with childcare data as the childcare sector has been registered much longer. She agreed that there is an issue with staff turnover in the ASC sector. With increased data gathering we have better evidence to influence partners in the sector to assist in addressing qualifications and turnover, noting that funding for this is an issue. • Laura Lamb confirmed that turnover is slowing down, however it will take approximately three years before we see benefits from the FPP which we expect to impact on the turnover rate. • Edel Harris commented on the upcoming election noting that the NCS did not appear to be high on the priority list of the parties. • Rona King's concern is that while childcare seemed to be given priority, ASC was a much more complex area especially given the rise in the aging population. She asked what we, as a council, could do to influence the MSPs. Maree Allison agreed to look at this sector in particular. • Maree Allison advised that the matter of qualification of the workforce was discussed at the recent meeting of the UK regulators and confirmed that Scotland is farthest ahead in this area. • Sandra Campbell raised the issue of workers from outside the UK and whether restrictions were affecting student numbers as well as

	<p>worker numbers and their ability to remain in the country, ie if family members cannot also live here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members also discussed whether working environment was an issue and agreed that this should form part of the joint session with the Care Inspectorate Board. The position with Care Inspectorate Officers was noted and this should be resolved with the avenue to qualification which was added relieving the current problem in sourcing the required training.
9.3	The Council
	1. approved the areas of focus within the report
	2. approved the six-monthly reporting cycle to Council
	3. endorsed the actions the SSSC is taking to support the workforce to become qualified
	4. requested that, if possible, the action list include where accountability for actions sit and also includes additional contributors to the actions.
10.	Review of the principles and criteria applied to the assessment and approval of qualifications for registration
10.1	Laura Lamb presented report 20/2024 which provided Members with an overview of the proposed changes to the criteria applied to assessment and approval of qualifications for registration with the SSSC. This is in accordance with the functions set out in the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 (ROCA) delegated to us.
10.2	Laura Lamb advised that in the main, changes related to the language used, and the structure of the principles to make these clearer and easier to read. There is one substantial change to comply with current practice. This change is to remove the wording 'meets registration requirements set out by a nationally recognised regulatory body.' Laura Lamb explained that we currently do not accept other bodies' qualification standards as they do not match our standards.
10.3	The Council
	1. approved the revised principles and criteria.
11.	Review of the requirements for social work training
11.1	Laura Lamb presented report 21/2024 which summarised proposals for changes to teaching and assessment of the qualifying programmes outlined in the Framework for Social Work Education. Many of the changes are minor and were proposed following discussions with partners such as the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). The proposals are designed to bring consistency to the courses. She also emphasised the interim measure regarding link workers/workplace supervisors to support those practice educators who are not currently registered Social Workers. This measure would be in place between September 2025 and September 2027 to support the proposed changes.
11.2	Members asked questions and discussed whether there were sufficient placements for the increase in practice learning opportunities. Laura

	Lamb added that there are now greater numbers of students coming through the system. Sharon Ballingall spoke about the challenges in finding practice placements and agreed that the proposal would provide more clarity and consistency which would also lead to better support for workers.
11.3	Laura Lamb added that the Social Work Education Partnership (SWEP) carries out a monthly review of social work students and that we will monitor compliance with the proposed changes as they come into effect.
11.4	The Council
	1. approved the proposed changes to the Requirements for Social Work Training and the timescales for implementation.
12.	Complaints Performance – annual update for period 01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024
12.1	Laura Shepherd presented report 22/2024 which included the annual report on Complaints Performance 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024. She summarised the main highlights in the report and confirmed that our complaints handling performance compared well against other public bodies.
12.2	Maree Allison advised that we anticipate that we will receive an increased number of complaints once the FPP launches. We have identified various topics that are likely to be the subject of complaints and we will be in a position to identify which complaints are related to FPP.
12.3	The Council
	1. noted the performance in responding to complaints in 2023/24
	2. approved the annual complaints performance report to be published on the website.
13.	Digital Strategy Annual report
13.1	Laura Shepherd presented report 23/2024 which provided a summary of digital development and activity in the SSSC in 2023/24. She highlighted that of the nine projects agreed by the digital programme board, eight are completed and one due to be completed in 2024/25.
13.2	She advised on the equipment refresh which had involved a company who specialises reuse and refurbishment. There was some discussion on whether we could measure this against the SSSC's carbon footprint. This refresh will only occur every four or five years and it was therefore not thought to be significant. Laura Shepherd also confirmed that the contract with the company states that it will undertake clearing data and information from the equipment.
13.3	Members also discussed the cyber security exercises carried out and Laura Shepherd confirmed that these are carried out frequently and this has added to the numbers of suspicious emails being referred to

	the digital team for its input. This indicates higher staff awareness of the possibility of cyber fraud.
13.4	The Council
	1. endorsed the progress made against the Digital Strategy.
14.	People Management Policies – Code of Conduct
14.1	Laura Lamb presented report 24/2024 with the revised Code of Conduct for employees attached. She summarised the main changes from the previous version and also the review process followed. This included consulting with the Short-life Working Group. Rona King complimented Calum Kennedy, the Head of Human Resources on his approach and process in reviewing this policy.
14.2	The Council
	1. approved the updated Code of Conduct (Employees).
15.	Fitness to Practise Committee updates
15.1	Hannah Coleman presented report 25/2024 which gave details of the recruitment exercise recently carried out to appoint new members to the Fitness to Practise Committee, following the expiry of a number of appointments. These appointments are for both lay members and social service members and are for a period of three years, with an option to extend for a further period not exceeding four years.
15.2	The report advised of the reappointment of five Legally Qualified Chairs (LQCs) to the Fitness to Practise Committee who had reached the end of their initial three-year term of appointment. The report also advised of the reappointment of three LQCs to the Quality Assurance Sub-committee.
15.3	Hannah Coleman informed Members on the role of the Quality Assurance Sub-committee. She included an explanation as to why it was not workable to have social service members appointed, as they would only be able to quality assure committees where a member on their same register part had sat.
15.4	In answer to a query about why Council Members had no further information on the appointees, Maree Allison advised that there required to be distance between Council Members and Fitness to Practice Members and therefore the Council would not receive any additional information on the candidates.
15.5	The Council
	1. approved the appointment of 10 lay members to the Fitness to Practice Committee
	2. approved the appointment of nine social service panel members to the Fitness to Practice Committee
	3. approved the appointment of five existing LQCs to the Fitness to Practice Committee

	4. approved the reappointment of three LQCs to the Quality Assurance Sub-committee
	5. endorsed the approach of the Quality Assurance Sub-committee.
16.	Council Action record
16.1	The Council reviewed the Council action record and noted that actions C23/25, C23/31, C23/32, C23/33, C23/34, C23/35, C23/36 and C23/39 were completed. Details will be held on file for future reference.
17.	Calendar of business and date of next meeting
17.1	Council noted the calendar of business for 2024/25 and also that the next scheduled meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday 22 August 2024 at 10am.
17.2	Sandra Campbell reminded Members that meetings should be attended in person where possible and advise her and the corporate governance coordinator if they are to be absent or attending online.

Council started: 10am
Council finished: 1.45pm

Signed _____
Sandra Campbell
Convener

Date_____