

**SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL**

**Unconfirmed minutes of the Scottish Social Service Council  
held on 24 August 2023 at 10.00am in Quadrant House, 11 Riverside Drive,  
Dundee DD1 4NY and by Teams meeting**

**Present:** Sandra Campbell, Convener  
Professor Alan Baird, Council Member  
Julie Grace, Council Member  
Rona King, Council Member  
Lindsay MacDonald, Council Member  
Doug Moodie, Council Member (online)  
Peter Murray, Council Member

**In attendance:** Maree Allison, Acting Chief Executive  
Hannah Coleman, Acting Director, Regulation  
Laura Lamb, Acting Director, Workforce, Education and Standards  
Laura Shepherd, Director, Strategy and Performance  
Nicky Anderson, Head of Finance  
Anne Stewart, Head of Legal and Corporate Governance  
Audrey Wallace, Corporate Governance Coordinator

**Observing:** The link was shared and there were up to 10 online observers

	<i>(Item number 1 was not in use)</i>
<b>2</b>	<b>Welcome and apologies</b>
2.1	Sandra Campbell welcomed those present to the meeting and noted that there were a number of online observers.
2.2	Apologies were intimated on behalf of Theresa Allison, Lynne Huckerby and Linda Lennie, Council Members and Lorraine Gray, Chief Executive. Doug Moodie submitted apologies for the private session. The meeting was quorate.
<b>3</b>	<b>Declarations of interest</b>
3.1	There were no declarations of interest.
<b>4</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting – 25 May 2023</b>
4.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2023 were approved as an accurate record.
<b>5</b>	<b>Matters arising</b>
5.1	There were no matters arising from the minutes that are not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

<b>6.</b>	<b>Convener's report</b>
6.1	Sandra Campbell presented report 25/2023, which summarised her activities as Convener since the Council meeting in May 2023.
6.2	Alan Baird asked about progress on the re-establishment of joint meetings with NHS Education Scotland (NES). The Convener and Maree Allison confirmed that the Memorandum of Understanding between the SSSC and NES had been signed and this would be circulated to Members for information. Both spoke about the collaborative work that could be carried out as a result of this partnership, including further development of the workforce, sharing data as well as strategic opportunities of working together.
6.3	Peter Murray suggested that the work of the SSSC and NES could feed into the work of Health and Social Care Scotland and that he would share contact details with Maree Allison.
6.4	The Council
	1. noted the summary of the key issues and the verbal information shared.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Chief Executive's report</b>
7.1	<p>Maree Allison presented report 26/2023 which provided an update to Council Members on matters of strategic importance which are reported and linked to the outcomes in the Strategic Plan. The three main points brought out in the report were</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progressing of workstreams relating to the National Care Service (NCS)</li> <li>• work on the 2024/25 budget</li> <li>• ongoing work on the Future Proofing Programme with the new register commencing in April 2024.</li> </ul> <p>Maree Allison also added that the delayed report on the Independent Review of Inspection, Scrutiny and Regulation (IRISR) was now due to be released in September and a report would therefore come to Council in November 2023.</p>
7.2	Members discussed the situation with low numbers of Mental Health Officers (MHO). There was some reference to whether the figures included reference to the different categories of MHO, ie some who were fulltime MHOs and there were also those who carried out this function as an additional element to their job. Laura Lamb noted that there is a slight increase in MHOs however this is outnumbered by the increased hours requested.
7.3	The Council
	1. noted the information contained in the report.
<b>8.</b>	<b>Audit and Assurance Committee's report to Council</b>

8.1	Alan Baird presented report 27/2023 the Audit and Assurance Committee's quarterly report to Council. He particularly highlighted the revised format of the assurance report and risk register. He clarified that, although the report had been revised, it had been agreed that a working group meet to discuss any matters still outstanding. It was suggested that these may relate to how the information is reported and how to better align the data with the strategic outcomes. It was anticipated that any issues may be resolved in a single meeting. Theresa Allison and Lindsay MacDonald will attend on behalf of the Committee.
8.2	Alan Baird referred to some of the data included within the report focussing on the percentages of qualified workers broken down by register part and the vast difference between categories. He commented on the lack of data from the Orkney and Shetland islands and hoped this could be rectified in future. Maree Allison added that some of the lower percentages in workers obtaining qualifications were due to these categories coming onto the register in later years, so workers have not yet had five years to complete qualifications. The lower numbers of qualified workers in adult care would be further looked at as part of the Adult Social Care response plan.
8.3	Discussion continued on ensuring workers were carrying out the correct and recognised Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) and also how having qualified workers linked into the risk register and whether there is a risk to the organisation where workers have not completed qualifications. Sandra Campbell commented that a joint meeting between the Council and the Board of the Care Inspectorate was planned, hopefully to take place during autumn, as this along with outcomes of the IRISR must also contribute to the quality of care provided to those in receipt of services.
8.4	There was some further discussion on the risk register and it was noted that risk 9, relating to uncertainty over the office accommodation, was now closed.
8.5	Alan Baird referred to the audit report submitted to Committee noting that this provided a good level of assurance over the financial sustainability of the organisation. However he emphasised that this referred to the planning put in place by senior management and did not assure the organisation of the future financial challenges that it faces.
8.6	The Council
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. accepted that the assurance report presents a true and fair view of the SSSC's 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</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

	<p>delivering as forecasted to meet strategic objectives agreed with the Sponsor Department</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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> </ul> <p>2. noted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. that reports are submitted to this meeting of the Council on staffing in Fitness to Practise department, shared services and pay and grading</li> <li>b. risk number 9 is closed</li> <li>c. senior management will produce and share scenarios on outcomes should funding fall short of that required to carry out the Strategic Plan</li> <li>d. a fraud action plan will be submitted to Committee in October</li> <li>e. that revised financial governance documents were approved.</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Draft Annual Report and Accounts Review</b>
9.1	<i>This item was moved to the private session of the meeting.</i>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Agile Working Policy Update</b>
10.1	Laura Lamb presented report 29/2023, the Agile Working Policy update and highlighted that some amendments had been made to the policy following the learning from the past year of agile working in the organisation. She advised that there had been no negative effect on performance, there was improvement in recruitment and retention rates, excepting in specific areas which are as a result of separate issues.
10.2	Rona King commented that the small working group on HR policies had reviewed the policy and requested that two suggested changes had not come through in this version. It was agreed that these should have been and would be included in the published version and were in relation to wording of paragraphs 6.1 and 6.8.
10.3	Members then discussed the importance of receipt of staff responses and views on agile working. Not only the views of management should be taken into account in order to form a balanced assessment of the success of the agile working format. Laura Lamb added that a number of measures were included within the People Strategy following feedback received.
10.4	Some Members commented that the staff positive response to agile working appeared to oppose the national trend, to go back into the office. Maree Allison added some context in that our digital upgrade was carried out prior to the pandemic and this provided us with a fairly smooth transition to working from home. She added that much of the work was process-based and this transitioned well to agile and home working. The digital systems have kept the teams well connected and

	staff connected with each other. Performance in many process-based areas has improved. In other areas which were not process-based, employee/manager engagement ensures that workload is being managed well.
10.5	Discussion turned to health and safety issues and slips, trips and falls, Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments and home insurance. Rona King advised that these matters had been discussed during the writing of the policy and this review has resulted in a more robust policy, with the knowledge gained over the last three years. Maree Allison assured Members that these areas were the responsibility of each staff member. Rona King agreed that time will tell whether there are likely to be actions raised against employers, generally, for any issues occurring due to staff working from home. This will be kept under review and any matters reported as necessary. Following an issue that Sandra Campbell picked up from the Staff Conference, Maree Allison clarified that some staff have indicated that they want to work in the office full time and that is accepted and catered for in having a permanent desk allocated, rather than hot desking. To work from home is a choice.
10.6	The Council
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. approved the updated Agile Working Policy subject to the amendments to paragraphs 6.1 and 6.8 as previously agreed by the working group on HR policies</li> <li>2. endorsed the further recommendations to support implementation as outlined in the report.</li> </ol>
<b>11.</b>	<b>People Strategy Annual Report</b>
11.1	Laura Lamb presented report 30/2023, the People Strategy Annual report which provided the Council with an update on the progress of delivery of the People Strategy for 2021-2024. She referred to the internal management development programme 'managing the SSSC way' and also that a number of key activities from previous years are now embedded into business as usual activities. Laura Lamb also spoke to challenges including internal and external resource issues. She spoke of the results of the 2022 staff survey which were largely positive, apart from issues on pay and reward.
11.2	It was noted that the ongoing issues with the pay and grading review skewed the results of the survey as well as resulting in a high score in the risk register. It was agreed that this could not currently be reported separately as it formed an integral part of the People Strategy.
11.3	Laura Lamb confirmed she was confident about delivery of the projects scheduled into year three, reiterating that many activities from previous years were now embedded processes. She agreed to report to Members should the schedule timelines start to slip.
11.4	Following a query raised by Alan Baird, Laura Lamb confirmed that work will continue on European Foundation for Quality Management

	(EFQM) which will help in strengthening some of the working in the organisation. This was important especially following the loss of the suppliers for the Investors in People and Investors in Young People awards.
11.5	Lindsay MacDonald asked about measuring the impact or outcomes of the activities in the strategy and Laura Lamb explained that amongst other benefits, the impact will be seen in the results from the next staff survey. The information will also be gathered and will help form the next version of the operational plan.
11.6	The Council
	1. noted the progress update on year two of the People Strategy
	2. endorsed the indicative operational delivery plan for year three.
<b>12.</b>	<b>Health and Safety report</b>
12.1	Laura Shepherd presented report 31/2023, along with the Annual Health and Safety report for 2022/23 and the revised Corporate Health and Safety Policy. She advised on the recent changes to the governance, including the joint decision to separate the Health and Safety Committees for the SSSC and the Care Inspectorate, having operated a joint committee for around two years. The Chair of the SSSC's committee is the Director of Strategy and Performance, as part of her responsibility of oversight of the shared services.
12.2	Laura Shepherd then referred Members to the data being reported in the annual report, which included the number of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments relating to staff working from home under the Agile Working Policy.
12.3	Rona King suggested that it would be useful to see target rates to help assess the statistics on online training. On a second query about stress management, there appeared to be an anomaly between statistics on stress risk assessments and completion of the course on handling workplace stress. Laura Shepherd assured Members that work was being carried out to better capture and record information on workplace stress. It being acknowledged that it is difficult to separate workplace stress from other issues arising outwith the workplace.
12.4	Members posed a number of questions over aspects in the policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• revised wording on accountability was requested</li> <li>• ensure all matters that should be reported are being reported in the annual report</li> <li>• concern over staff working in their own homes. This is not classed as lone working</li> <li>• clarified that the Health and Safety Committee is operational and any issues will be reported through the assurance report and brought to Council.</li> </ul>
12.5	The Council
	1. endorsed the Annual Health and Safety Report for 2022/23

	2. approved the revised Corporate Health and Safety Policy subject to minor amendments discussed
	3. agreed that the three policies discussed today be recirculated to Members once the minor amendments have been included.
<b>13.</b>	<b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy</b>
13.1	Laura Shepherd presented report 32/2023, The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy to seek approval from the Council. She referred to the changes and updates to the policy made following consultations. She particularly mentioned the Community of Practice which met the previous day and was well attended and the inclusion of references to raising awareness of microaggressions.
13.2	Members asked for clarification of the role of the Council and how Members can be assured of the application of the principles. Anne Stewart advised that these matters are captured in the assurance mapping exercise. For transparency, wording to this effect will be included within the policy. There will also be a word change from 'responsible' to 'accountable' to better reflect the Council's role.
13.3	In general terms, the possibility of including a link to the Code of Corporate Governance RACI chart into each policy was proposed which would then show clearly how duties relating to policies are discharged.
13.4	The Council
	1. approved the updated policy subject to changes to the wording around the role of the Council.
<b>14.</b>	<b>Council Action Record</b>
14.1	Members reviewed the Council action record and agreed that actions C12, C23/1, C23/2, C23/3, C23/4, C23/6, C23/7, C23/8, C23/9, C23/10, C23/11, C23/12 and C23/13 be removed from the list but held in archive for future reference.
<b>15.</b>	<b>Date of next meeting – 23 November 2023 at 10.00 am</b>
15.1	The next meeting scheduled for the Council is Tuesday 31 October 2023 to consider the Annual Report and accounts only. The next meeting for usual business is on Thursday 23 November 2023. Both meetings will be in hybrid format.
	<i>Items 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20 and AOB were considered in private and minuted separately.</i>

Committee started: 10am  
Committee finished: 2pm

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

Date\_\_\_\_\_