

## OFFICEHOLDER – ACCOMMODATION PROJECT

### Executive summary

1. This Paper provides the SPCB with a final report on the accommodation project undertaken to co-locate 3 of the officeholders to Bridgeside House in McDonald Road, Edinburgh. The project was completed within budget and timescale.

### Background

2. As the SPCB will recall, in October 2017 it agreed to pursue its co-location policy and to co-locate up to 3 officeholders given an opportunity would arise in 2018 to do so.

3. The co-location opportunity arose as a result of –

- The Ombudsman’s lease on 4 Melville Street ending in September 2018 and the option to remain not being practicable due to the building being too small (additional staff had been taken on as a result of additional statutory functions and they were based in a satellite office) and the landlord having obtained planning permission to convert the property into flats and any extension to the lease being time-limited;
- the Children’s Commissioner lease on Rosbery House ending in September 2019; and
- the Scottish Human Rights Commission’s lease of Governor’s House (on the Scottish Government’s Estate) being flexible enough to enable it to be terminated at short notice and we were aware from Scottish Government officials that the Scottish Government had other offices they wanted to occupy the space leased by the SHRC.

4. It was established that to maximise the use of space in a buoyant commercial property market the co-location of 3 officeholders (in reasonable, non-central office accommodation which met necessary statutory requirements) where common spaces such as meeting rooms could be shared, was the most cost-effective option rather than trying to lease 3 separate offices. In addition, it was envisaged that the co-location would provide opportunities between the officeholders for the sharing of services.

5. A small project group was established with a representative from each of the offices (the Ombudsman, the Children’s Commissioner (Commissioner) and the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC)) and professional advisers. Liam McArthur MSP and Sandra White MSP provided valuable support to officials throughout the project.

6. Following an extensive search, Bridgeside House in McDonald Road was identified as a suitable property in February 2018. Bridgeside House offers

16,568 sq ft of modern, accessible accommodation over 3 floors with good public transport links. The accommodation provides an additional 4,223 sqft which has allowed for the provision of shared meeting rooms, a large multi-purpose training room and a shared kitchen area.

7. Lease negotiations were completed in August 2018 which included a rent-free period for 1 year and a further 12 months at half-rent and a new shower block with an accessible toilet in the garage (as we asked the landlord to include an accessible toilet in the shower block, we made a capital contribution of £17k plus VAT toward the new shower block).

8. Following a procurement exercise, a contract was let to Thomas Johnstone Ltd on 3 September for £692k plus VAT for the fitting out of Bridgeside House. The contract start date was 10 September 2018 with full completion due by 3 December 2018 (12 weeks). The anticipated final cost following instructions is around £715k plus VAT.

9. The contractor did an excellent job and whilst there continues to be some snagging, they completed the work allowing the SPSO to move in as planned on 3 December, the Children's Commissioner on 10 December 2018 and the SHRC on 21 January 2019. Feedback from staff is very positive.

10. Pictures of Bridgeside House pre-fitout are attached at Annex A.

### **Resource Implications**

11. A budget of £1.75m was provided for the project which included funding for the fitout, furniture, dilapidations for existing premises were applicable, professional advisers, removal costs and double running costs for the Children's Commissioner who would be moving out of Rosebery House before the end of his lease in September 2019. We did, however, manage to assign the remaining part of the Commissioner's lease from December 2018 to September 2019, to Sustrans.

12. The estimated total cost for the project is £1.6m resulting in savings of £150k.

### **Governance issues**

13. We await copies of the officeholders Equality Impact Assessments and a joint business case for any proposed changes to staff terms and conditions as a result of moving to Bridgeside House. We are aware that officeholders have taken steps to mitigate the impact of this modest move within Edinburgh and any proposed changes which they judge valid would be subject to a business case to the SPCB.

### **Publication Scheme**

14. This paper may be published.

## **Decision**

15. The SPCB is invited to note the project has been completed and that a visit to Bridgeside House has been arranged on a planned SPCB meeting date - Thursday 7 March 2019.

Officeholder Services  
February 2019



