

OFFICEHOLDER ISSUES

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider 4 yearly strategic plans in respect of the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Standards Commission for Scotland.

Issues and Options

2. In accordance with the Scottish Parliamentary Commissions and Commissioners etc. Act 2010 all officeholders are required to lay strategic plans before the Parliament for each 4 year period commencing from 1 April 2012. Each plan is required to set out (a) the objectives and priorities for the 4 year period, (b) how it is proposed to achieve these, (c) a timetable and (d) estimates of the costs.

3. Before laying the plan before Parliament the officeholders are required to provide a draft of the plan and invite comments from the SPCB and any other body or person the officeholder considers appropriate, including a committee of the Parliament.

4. Plans have now been received from the Scottish Human Rights Commission and Standards Commission for Scotland. These are attached at Annex A. The SPCB may recall that at its meeting on 22 February 2012 it noted the strategic plans in respect of the other officeholders it supports.

5. As would be expected, in general, the objectives and priorities for the 4 year period relate to the operational functions of each body. Therefore, while there is nothing to prevent comments being made about any aspect of the plan, we would suggest the SPCB focuses consideration on the governance elements of the plans.

6. In relation to the specific plans we offer the following comments:

Scottish Human Rights Commission

7. The plan has 5 strategic objectives: (i) promoting greater awareness and respect for human rights through empowering people to realise their rights; (ii) supporting others to put human rights into practice; (iii) furthering human rights protection in Scotland through influencing law and policy; (iv) advancing the realisation of human rights in Scotland and the world through further developing an international role and (v) ensuring everything that is done is delivered effectively and efficiently and that the office is professional and accountable. This fifth objective relates to making the best use of resources and demonstrating continuous improvement in operational

efficiency and supporting the professional development of staff which is to be welcomed.

8. The Commission has also recognised in its foreword that the plan is shaped by a number of challenges in the period ahead which it has identified as the economic circumstances and consequent impact; the debate on Scotland's constitutional future and the future of human rights legislation in the UK and the proposed UK Bill of Rights.

9. In terms of resources, the Commission's budget is generally spread fairly across all five priorities.

10. The SPCB is invited to consider the plan.

Standards Commission for Scotland

11. The draft plan has 4 strategic themes: (i) to promote the ethical standards framework to ensure codes of conduct are recognised and respected by the public and other stakeholders; (ii) to assist councils and public bodies to achieve the highest ethical standards of conduct and ensure the advice and support provided by the Commission responds to their needs; (iii) to enforce the codes of conduct impartially, timeously and in accordance with legislation; and (iv) to operate in accordance with the principles of good governance, best value, joint working and joint partnership. The first 3 of these reflect the statutory role of the office.

12. In terms of resources, over half of the budget is directed towards enforcement and promotion, which is to be expected, with a further one-third estimated to be spent on the Commission's advisory role.

The SPCB is invited to consider the plan.

Resource Implications

13. In relation to the strategic plans, we can confirm that the plans are compatible with the indicative budgetary costs already submitted to the SPCB as part of next year's budget submission which covers the first 2 year period of the plans. Figures for the subsequent 2 year period are also indicative figures and are included for illustrative purposes only and should not be read as part of any future submission as the SPCB has not yet considered budgets for this timeframe.

Governance issues

14. The preparation of a strategic plan is a statutory requirement.

Publication Scheme

15. This paper may be published.

Decision

16. The SPCB is invited to consider and note the strategic plans in respect of:

- 16.1 Scottish Human Rights Commission; and
- 16.2 Standards Commission for Scotland

Officeholder Services
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