



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## The Presiding Officer

Richard Leonard MSP  
Convener  
Public Audit Committee

8 November 2022

Dear Richard,

### **2020/21 AUDIT OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR ETHICAL STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE IN SCOTLAND**

Thank you for your letter of 21 October 2022 on behalf of your Committee about the 2020/21 audit of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland.

I am grateful to your Committee for the work it has undertaken on this matter and I will ensure that the SPCB keeps the Committee fully informed about the work we are undertaking to enhance the governance arrangements. I note from your letter that the Committee recognises this work is currently in development and I hope the Committee was reassured by my letter of 6 May 2022 that there are significant governance arrangements already in place and which are working well.

In your letter, you ask what steps, beyond the written agreement referred to in our evidence, the SPCB is seeking to build stronger relationships with committees. I hope your Committee will appreciate that this can only be effective if there is a joint approach. It is not for the SPCB in any way to interfere in committees' own decisions about their work programmes. We will, therefore, be giving further consideration about how relationships can develop and engaging with those committees who have the functional oversight of officeholders for their input.

I would also like to take this opportunity to update you about the SPCB's consideration of the business case submitted by the Acting Commissioner which is mentioned in your letter. The business case was accompanied by a detailed workforce plan and, after meeting with the Acting Commissioner to discuss the case (and taking into account the issues raised by the Auditor General in his Section 22 report), the SPCB agreed to provide funding to enable the Commissioner to recruit an additional 7.4 FTE staff. I hope you will agree this is a substantial investment in the office, which we hope will address capacity concerns, improve resilience, and assist the office in meeting its key performance targets.

I will update the Committee on the progress of the other enhancements in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Johnstone". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'J'.

**Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP**  
Presiding Officer