



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Ben Macpherson MSP
Convener
SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee

28 May 2025

Dear Mr Macpherson

SPCB evidence session – follow up information

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to your meeting on 15 May 2025. This letter provides some follow up information following our discussions.

SPCB advisory group on officeholders

During the meeting, we discussed an option that the SPCB had previously considered, to establish an Advisory Group on officeholders. Some further information on this proposal, and why it was not progressed, is provided below.

The SPCB's primary purpose under the Scotland Act 1998 is to provide, or ensure the Parliament is provided with, the property, staff and services it requires. In addition, the SPCB also has functions conferred on it by any other enactment. As the Committee is aware, over the years, the Parliament has passed legislation establishing various officeholders, which has conferred governance oversight and budgetary approval functions on the SPCB.

In 2022, the SPCB considered whether to establish an Advisory Group, reporting to the SPCB with recommendations on all issues surrounding the governance of officeholders. The purpose behind this proposal was to try to reduce the time spent on officeholder matters by the SPCB itself and allow the SPCB more time to focus on its primary role.

The key point in the SPCB's consideration was that any group could only operate in an advisory and consultative capacity to both the Clerk and the SPCB in the oversight of officeholders. This would mean, in effect, that the SPCB would still need to consider all officeholder issues for decision, albeit with a recommended approach from the Advisory Group. It was felt that, because of this, the potential benefits of the approach would likely not be fully realised and so the SPCB decided not to go ahead with the proposal.

Contact: Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email SPCBsecretariat@parliament.scot. Telephone 0131 348 5305. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

The SPCB did, though, consider how such a group might operate, the key features of which are set out below:

- **Remit:** the group could have a wide remit, advising the SPCB on all aspects of the statutory role.
- **Recruitment:** the SPCB would retain its role as a selection panel for relevant appointments.
- **Procedures:** would be for the advisory group, but it would be expected the group would meet monthly and would report to the SPCB on all relevant issues on a monthly basis.
- **Membership:** the proposal was for a cross-party group of MSPs, with an SPCB member also sitting on the group. The group would need secretariat support, drawn from the Chief Executive's office.

Bridgeside House – rent review

We are aware that the Committee is interested in receiving further information on the lease at Bridgeside House.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) entered into a 10-year lease at Bridgeside House Edinburgh on 15 August 2018 as part of the SPCB's shared services agenda. The Commissioner for Children and Young People, the Scottish Human Rights Commissioner and the Biometrics Commissioner are co-located with the SPSO in Bridgeside House. The Patient Safety Commissioner for Scotland will also be co-located at Bridgeside House.

Subject to available space, we will endeavour to co-locate any new officeholders in Bridgeside House or with another SPCB supported officeholder. Although Officeholder Services ran the co-location project, the SPSO is the leaseholder for Bridgeside House.

The lease provides for a rent review at year 5 (August 2023). The landlord contacted the SPSO in February 2024 and the SPSO in turn contacted Officeholder Services to assist with the rent review process. Using one of the SPCB's contracts, a surveyor at Avison Young was engaged to lead the rent review negotiations.

Once negotiations had been completed, a Rent Review Memo was drafted by the landlord's solicitors, approved by the SPSO's solicitors, signed by both parties and recorded in the Books of Council and Session. The rent review process was completed by end August 2024.

If you or the Committee require any further information from the SPCB to inform your deliberations, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Allan Campbell, Head of Operations, Chief Executive Group