



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body
Thursday 19 June 2025 (Session 6)

Officeholders – Contingency Request

Executive summary

1. This paper invites the SPCB to consider a contingency fund application from the Standards Commission for Scotland (SCS).
2. The Officeholders' Contingency Fund for 2025/26 is £500k.

Issues and options

3. Individual officeholders' budgets do not contain contingency funding. Instead, the SPCB has established a separate central Officeholders' Contingency Fund for exceptional one-off expenditure which cannot be met from an officeholder's approved budget for any given year. This arrangement also prevents an officeholder's budget baseline increasing due to one-off costs in any given financial year.
4. Contingency funding may be requested for costs such as defending legal actions and for temporary staff cover for maternity absences etc.
5. Requests for contingency funding can be made at any time of the year but we would not expect an officeholder to draw down the funding until it is clear that they are unable to meet the costs, in full or part, from their approved budget.
6. The officeholders keep officials informed of any potential calls on the Contingency Fund throughout the year.

Background

7. The SCS is currently the smallest officeholder supported by the SPCB. Its budget for 2025/26 is £373k. The Convener and the four members of the SCS are all part-time. It has 3.8 FTE members of staff as follows–
 - Executive Director and Accountable Officer (f/t)
 - Case Manager (p/t)
 - Office Manager (p/t)

- Administrative Assistant (p/t)

Contingency Application

8. The SCS is seeking contingency funding of up to £20,638 in 2025/26 for an increase in staffing resources to allow them to continue to fulfil their statutory duties and meet strategic and operational objectives and the needs and expectations of stakeholders.
9. They are seeking funding for changes to the Case Manager role as follows –
 - a temporary increase in hours from 25 to 35 hours a week; and
 - a change in grading from a Grade 4 to a Grade 5.
10. In the past year the SCS has experienced a 44% increase in the number of cases referred to it by the Ethical Standards Commissioner and a corresponding increase in the number of Hearings it has to run. The SPCB will recall that the SCS issued Directions to the then ESC in 2020 and one of the Directions required the ESC to provide the SCS at the conclusion of every investigation, with a report outlining the findings and recommendations and whether a breach had occurred. Although the Directions have all now expired, the ESC continues to report on all cases about councillors and members that have been investigated regardless of whether the ESC has concluded there has been a breach.
11. In addition to the increase in the number of cases, the type of cases being referred for adjudication are more complex dealing with allegations of bullying, harassment and other disrespectful conduct.
12. The SCS has also increased its training and outreach work which is mainly undertaken by the Executive Director and the Case Manager. When the SCS appeared before the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee last November, the Committee indicated that it expected the SCS to increase the training it provides to local authorities.
13. The SCS also saw a 33% increase in the number of enquiries it received in 2024/25 compared to the previous year. Apart from straightforward enquiries, the Executive Director and Case Manager are responsible for dealing with these.
14. In addition to seeking an increase in hours for the postholder, the SCS is requesting that the Case Manager post be re-graded from a Grade 4 to a Grade 5 as a result of an increase in their responsibilities. In 2020, when the post was created, a formal job evaluation was undertaken using the SPCB's grading process. A desk-top job evaluation has been undertaken by the SCS which shows an upward change in some of the job evaluation factors and it is now seeking to have the post regraded.
15. If contingency funding is agreed, the SCS would intend to submit a business case, as part of its 2026/27 budget bid, for ongoing funding to make the above arrangement permanent.

Reference: SPCB (2025) - Paper 32

16. A breakdown of the costs in 2025/26 are set out in the table below. The increases below are based on a FTE Grade 4 salary of £54,166 (top of the salary scale) and the FTE Grade 5 salary of £56,875 (bottom of Grade 5 which rises to £68,301).

	Grade 4		Grade 5	
Hours	25	35	25	35
Salary	36,599	51,239	38,429	53,801
ERNIC	4,740	6,936	5,014	7,320
Pension	10,603	14,844	11,133	15,586
Total	51,942	73,019	54,576	76,707

17. To increase the postholder's hours as a Grade 4 from 25 to 35 hours per week would be £21,077 and to increase the postholder's hours and re-grade the post would be £24,765. This is based on 12 months. The actual cost in 2025/26, if approved, would be less given the changes would only be effective from the date the SPCB approves the request.

18. A copy of the SCS's application is attached at **Annex A**.

Governance

19. The SPCB has a statutory duty to approve the officeholders' funding and any staffing determinations.

Resource implications

20. The Officeholders Contingency Fund for 2025/26 is £500k. The SPCB has already approved contingency funding of £393k (temporary staff for the SBC and the SIC, implementation of the final recommendations of a governance review for the SHRC and funding for a fourth member of the SHRC) leaving a balance of £107k.
21. At this time, we are not aware of any other calls on contingency. Funding would therefore be available.

Publication Scheme

22. This paper can be published.

Decision

23. The SPCB is invited to consider the contingency funding application from the SCS.

Officeholder Services
June 2025