Chief Executive's Report to the SPCB March 2026

Introduction

This Report looks at activities across the organisation from October to March 2026. It also incorporates the Quarter 3 Finance, Performance and Workforce Data reports.

Items highlighted include:

- End of session business undertaken by the Parliamentary Business Directorate
- Recent engagements undertaken by the International Relations Office

David McGill
Clerk/Chief Executive

Parliamentary Business Directorate
Scrutiny
Economy and Fair Work Committee

The Economy and Fair Work Committee took evidence from the Deputy First Minister on budget allocations and the Scottish Government response to the Committee's pre-budget feedback. The convener also participated in the cross-committee budget debate. During scrutiny, the Committee noted that the 2020 legislation to establish the Scottish National Investment Bank, anticipated that the Bank would have a full range of financing powers. HM Treasury rules continue to prevent this and the Bank remains reliant on public capital funding. The Committee is pressing HM Treasury for progress.

The Committee published its stage 1 report on the Digital Assets (Scotland) Bill and its recommendation that the general principles be agreed to was supported by the Parliament. However, the Committee noted that the timescale for consideration of this Bill at stage 1, requested by the Scottish Government, had been very challenging. This is an increasingly complex area of law and further primary legislation is likely to be required, given the pace of global digital development.

The Committee also considered the Community Wealth Building Bill at stage 2. Considerably more amendments were lodged than had been anticipated and again the Scottish Government's timescale for completion was challenging.

The Committee has also played a key role in the shared scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan. The Committee worked closely with the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, co-ordinating effort and ensuring no duplication of witnesses. The Committee was unanimous in its concerns about the Plan and recently published its findings.

In the remaining time of the Session, the Committee will have an informal briefing and discussion with Sir Charlie Mayfield, former Chairman of the John Lewis Partnership, on his "Keep Britain Working" report. This is likely to contribute to the Committee's consideration of its legacy report.

Education, Children and Young People Committee

In January, the Education, Children and Young People Committee continued its ongoing scrutiny of the financial sustainability of the college and university sectors, hearing from the Principal of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), and from trade union representatives from SRUC and the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Strathclyde. The Committee also held its budget session with the Cabinet Secretary and supporting Ministers and agreed its Stage 1 report for the Restraint and Seclusion in Schools (Scotland) Bill.

In February, the Committee concluded its Stage 2 consideration of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill, before examining the impact of VAT being imposed on Independent Schools. The Committee also took further evidence on work to tackle group-based child sexual abuse and exploitation in Scotland.

In March, the Committee hopes to do some work around wider educational reform, scrutinising both the Curriculum Improvement Cycle and progression on reform to senior phase qualifications. It also hopes to hold a one-off session on Community Sporting Initiatives for children and young people.

Finance and Public Administration Committee

In January, the Finance and Public Administration Committee examined the Scottish Budget 2026-27, which this year was published much later than usual, leading to a truncated timetable for Parliamentary scrutiny. The Committee's report included immediate actions for the current Scottish Government and priorities for the next Government after the May election. It also provided an overview of its scrutiny of the SPCB's budget bid 2026-27.

As part of the budget process, the Committee piloted a new approach to its pre-budget debate with Conveners, by setting a broad theme of fiscal sustainability, sharing common themes across the Committees identified by SPICe, and building in more time for interventions. More work is needed to continue to build on these improvements.

The Committee's main focus during February and March is to hold evidence sessions on the Scottish Spending Review 2026 and Infrastructure Delivery Pipeline, which were both published alongside the Scottish Budget 2026-27. This will include hearing from experts on best practice for developing spending reviews and infrastructure plans and to provide a snapshot on how the Scottish documents are impacting public bodies and key sectors. It also plans to hear from experts to inform its legacy report for its successor committee, from the Permanent Secretary at a final annual session on public administration matters, and from the Scottish Public Pensions Agency on the McCloud Remedy.

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

During January, the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee has undertaken scrutiny of health implications of the Draft Climate Change Plan 2026-2040. This has been part of cross-committee scrutiny of the Plan spanning a number of subject committees. The Committee will agree a short report on its scrutiny of the Plan in early March

Also in January, the Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care on the Scottish Budget for 2026-27.

In February, the Committee took evidence from Scotland's first Patient Safety Commissioner, Karen Titchener, following commencement of her appointment

in September 2025. Questioning was focused on early reflections and initial priorities in relation to the role.

In the lead-up to the end of the parliamentary session, the Committee plans to undertake periodic scrutiny of the work of Food Standards Scotland and Public Health Scotland as well as holding an evidence session on sport and physical activity

On 24 February, the Committee will hold Stage 2 proceedings on the Non-Surgical Procedures and Medical Reviewers (Scotland) Bill, having concluded Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill by publishing its Stage 1 report on 27 January.

The Committee has also scheduled scrutiny of multiple items of subordinate legislation during this period, including:

- An affirmative instrument that will introduce a licensing scheme for lower risk procedures not covered by the Non-Surgical Procedures and Functions of Medical Reviewers (Scotland) Bill,

- Extensive scrutiny of a negative instrument that will extend voting rights on Integration Joint Boards to include service user, unpaid carer and third sector representatives,

- An affirmative instrument that would impose new duties and responsibilities relating to visiting arrangements on providers of care home services for adults (so-called "Anne's Law"), and

- An LCM on the UK Medical Training (Prioritisation) Bill.

Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee

During January, the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee has concluded its work on the draft Climate Change Plan and the Scottish Budget 2026-27, as well as considering the Visitor Levy (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill.

The Committee heard from the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Finance on the draft Climate Change Plan. This concluded its consideration of the draft Plan and the Committee published its report on 6 February. It also wrote to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee in advance of its final evidence sessions to provide an overview of the themes which arose during the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee's scrutiny.

The Committee also heard from the Cabinet Secretary for Housing and the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Finance on the Budget 2026-27.

The Visitor Levy (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill was introduced on 6 January 2026 and the Committee worked at pace to consider the Bill at Stage 1. It published its Stage 1 report on 11 February and recommended the Parliament agree to the general principles of the Bill.

The Committee has also considered several items of subordinate legislation during the period.

Public Audit Committee

During the reporting period, the Public Audit Committee has taken evidence from the Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) on his reports on NHS in Scotland 2025: Finance and performance, 2024/25 audit of the Scottish Government consolidated accounts, Fiscal Sustainability and Taxes report, 2024/25 audit of Historic Environment Scotland, reports on Delayed discharges: A symptom of the challenges faced by health and social care, and Community health and social care: Performance 2025.

In addition, the Committee has heard from the AGS and HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland on their report on Joint Best Value audit of policing in Scotland. Evidence has also been taken from UHI Perth, University of the Highlands and Islands and the Scottish Funding Council on the 2023/24 audit of UHI Perth and a letter has been sent to the Education, Children and Young People's Committee highlighting relevant issues for its consideration.

The Committee has also been undertaking a short inquiry into the Cairngorm Funicular Railway to look in more detail about how the project has been managed and the reasons behind the closures and escalating costs. In concluding its evidence taking, the Committee heard from contributors to Parkswatch Scotland, a website and blog which aims to hold Scotland's National Parks to account through constructive criticism and increased awareness. A report setting out the Committee's conclusions and recommendations will be published shortly.

Other work up until the end of the session will include further consideration of the Joint Best Value audit of policing in Scotland report where the Committee will hear from the Scottish Police Authority as Accountable Officer, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government; accountable officer sessions on NHS related audit reports. It will also hear from the GFG Alliance in relation to the Lochaber Smelter, which has been transferred into public ownership. The Committee will also take evidence from the AGS, the Scottish Public Pensions Agency and the Scottish Government on the 2024/25 audit of the Scottish Public Pensions Agency.

Social Justice and Social Security Committee

In January, Members held two panels on the operation of the Local Housing Allowance and the Discretionary Housing Payment, taking evidence from third sector organisations and local authorities. The sessions examined how the Allowance and Payment are functioning in practice, with a focus on financial pressures and their mitigating impact on homelessness.

The Committee considered the implications for Scotland following the UK Government's decision to abolish the two-child limit. Members explored the potential effects on families and on the wider social security system. As part of its annual scrutiny of Social Security Scotland, the Committee also took

evidence on the agency's performance, which followed a visit by Members to its offices in December.

Post-budget scrutiny formed a significant part of the Committee's January work. Members examined the Scottish Fiscal Commission's forecasts and took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice on the Scottish Government's budget proposals.

Members of the Committee attended the final cross-committee meeting on tackling drug deaths and drug harms. Members considered the legacy report, informed by a survey issued to all contributors to the cross-committee this session, including Members, witnesses and People's Panel Members, seeking views on how parliamentary scrutiny can better reflect the experiences and perspectives of people across Scotland.

Before dissolution, the Committee will hold a roundtable evidence session on the Funeral Support Payment, hearing from funeral directors, a national membership body and third sector organisations supporting applicants.

In March, the Committee will take evidence on the Job Start Payment from Scottish Government stakeholders and organisations working with young people. Members will then consider the Committee's Legacy and Annual Reports.

During the quarter, the Committee also participated in a Chamber debate on Stage 1 of the Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill. This followed the publication of the Committee's Stage 1 report in December. The Committee recommended that the Bill should not proceed, and the Bill subsequently fell.

SPICe

Scrutiny of the 2026-27 Scottish Budget

SPICe has supported Parliamentary scrutiny of the 2026-27 Scottish Budget with a range of outputs both in the run-up to the budget and following publication of the Budget on 13 January. SPICe's Financial Scrutiny Unit published a range of pre-budget blogs, followed by an immediate reaction blog on the same day as the Budget. During the following week, a full Budget briefing was published, along with interactive tools, spreadsheets and infographics. Across SPICe, briefings were prepared by subject specialists to support the range of subject committees holding Budget scrutiny sessions.

Preparations for the 2026 election

SPICe election preparation is well underway. We are providing a range of services and products in the lead-up to the election, including candidate and forecasting data, as well as information on Members who are standing down.

Planning has also begun for our post-election publications. These will include our in-depth election briefing, rapid response blog, updated Fact Sheets, and our flagship Session 7 Key Issues briefing.

SPICe is closely involved in the registration process, which relies heavily on Common Data, the Parliament's core parliamentary database.

Finally, SPICe is collaborating with Election Programme colleagues who are coordinating the induction programme for new Members, ensuring we are well-placed to provide research, information, and support to new Members and their staff.

Breakfast seminars

SPICe breakfast seminars for this session are coming to an end and will resume in Session 7. The following breakfast seminars have taken place in this period:

- 21 January: Scottish Fiscal Commission: the latest economic and fiscal outlook for Scotland
- 28 January: Promoting healthy ageing in Scotland
- 4 March: Scottish views on policy priorities

Inter-Parliamentary Finance Network

Three members of SPICe staff attended the Inter-Parliamentary Finance Network conference in Westminster on 29 and 30 January. The conference was an excellent opportunity to meet with colleagues from Parliamentary Budget Offices and Independent Fiscal Institutions from across the UK and Ireland, as well as from the OECD. Topics discussed included: communicating public finances, developing and delivering fiscal literacy training programmes, the opportunities and challenges of using AI in our roles, use of data products and sessions on demographics, productivity and local government finance.

People, Communications and Inclusion

Members' Expenses Scheme – Session 6 Scheme Review

The [SPCB's remit for an end of Session 6 review of the Members' Expenses Scheme](#), included reviews of:

- the Staff Cost Provision level to ensure it remains appropriate following a recent benchmarking exercise including consideration of pay and terms and conditions; and
- changes to training provision within the Scheme to ensure the changes made at the start of Session 6 to create a central training budget and limited delegation continue to meet Members and their staff needs.

Staff Cost Provision – Job Family Ranges

The current job families and methodology for determining and benchmarking the pay ranges that apply were agreed by the SPCB for session 6. Benchmarking exercises were carried out in 2023, and in 2025 in preparation for the next session. Data was drawn from comparable public-sector organisations, including IPSA and the Senedd, and representing locations across Scotland.

The analysis demonstrates that the current pay ranges broadly align with the external market. Across the job families, the MSP staff median salaries generally sit at or slightly above the median benchmarks drawn from comparators, indicating that the existing ranges remain competitive and well-positioned relative to the wider labour market.

On that basis, the methodology agreed by the SPCB at the start of session 6 remains fit for purpose. No major structural changes to the existing pay ranges are required as the core ranges remain proportionate, competitive, and reflective of the benchmark.

The benchmarking highlights areas where small refinements are appropriate to ensure continued alignment with SPCB agreed design principles. These adjustments are modest and targeted and will be made for Session 7 to ensure the ranges remain fair, sustainable and future proofed while preserving the overall shape and integrity of the existing pay structure.

Review of the training provision

At the start of Session 6, the SPCB established a centrally managed budget, out with the Members' Expenses Scheme, for the design and delivery of training for Members' staff. The SPCB also retained a delegation to officials, limited to £500 per Member per year, for the approval of requests from Members for the reimbursement of training costs for their staff for job specific training.

A review of the central training budget demonstrates that it has been highly effective and continues to deliver strong return on investment. Since its introduction in Session 6, training uptake has increased, rising from negligible levels under the previous model - where, for example, only £1,718 and £1,440 in total was reimbursed across all Members, for staff training, in 2014/15 and 2015/16 - to a point where nearly three-quarters (approximately 73%) of current MSP staff have now completed at least one training course, including mandatory modules.

One in five MSP staff have proactively engaged in live sessions, both in-person and online. This includes participation in a diverse range of sessions such as Prescribed Persons Training, Speechwriting, Communication Skills, Developing Managers, Mental Health Awareness and Resilience and Self-care.

Feedback has been positive, with demand for repeat sessions and evidence of impact on staff knowledge, skills and confidence. This reflects not only the

benefits of a centralised budget and an accessible learning platform, but also the value of a coordinated approach that ensures equitable access and economies of scale across the Members staff group.

Ongoing engagement through the MSP Staff Forum ensures that training remains responsive to staff needs, with programme design informed by real-time feedback. Looking ahead, we will continue to build on this success and are currently developing the programme for Session 7, to ensure that all Members' staff have access to the development they need.

Events and Exhibitions Team

The annual **Consular Corps' Burns Supper** hosted by the Presiding Officer took place on Wednesday 21 January. Members along with members of the Scottish Consular Corps came together to celebrate Scotland's National Bard in an evening that featured traditional Scottish music and poetry from two Young Burnsian 2025 winners and featured traditional songs performed by musician and vocalist, Hannah Rarity accompanied by Alistair Patterson.

The **Festival of Politics** hosted two free public discussion panels on Monday 16 February. *Scotland at the Crossroads: Net Zero and the Next Parliament* in partnership with the Centre for Public Policy at the University of Glasgow chaired by Edward Mountain MSP, Convener, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee; *Sport and the Power of Soft Power* in partnership with the Scottish Council on Global Affairs chaired by Brian Whittle MSP, member, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee.

On Saturday 21 February, the Scottish Parliament hosted **Scotland's Disability Summit.** The hybrid Summit, in association with the Cross-Party Group on Disability, brought together disabled people, carers, advocates and allies to reflect on progress and look into the future. The Summit provided an opportunity for delegates and Members to discuss ideas for change. They discussed and agreed a number of actions around transport, social care, inclusive education, social security and voting.

Scottish Community Alliance: Local People Leading will take place on Friday 27 February in partnership with the Scottish Community Alliance, a coalition of national networks representing the full breadth of the community sector. The event will bring together over 250 community leaders, public sector stakeholders from across the country with Members to share insights, achievements, and ambitions for a fairer and more sustainable future.

The Presiding Officer will host an event to mark **International Women's Day** on Saturday 7 March. The Presiding Officer will chair a panel discussion on the *Future of Democracy for Women and Girls* that will explore the impact of the Scottish Parliament's Gender Sensitive Audit, female political leadership and what the Parliament should prioritise for Session 7 with regard to women and girls. Speakers include representatives from Elect Her, the National Advisory Council on Women and Girls, the Scottish Youth Parliament and Young Women Lead who will take part in the question-and-answer session for all attendees.

International Relations Office

The International Relations Office arranged inward visit programmes for a number of cross-party and diplomatic delegations (Ambassadors and Deputy Heads of Mission) during the reporting period. This included visits to Holyrood by the Speakers from the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and the Provincial Assembly of Balochistan (Pakistan).

A meeting of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) Steering Committee was held in Holyrood at the start of February and was attended by Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP. The arrangements and theme for the March's plenary in Cork, Ireland – the last of the current parliamentary Session – as well as revised procedures and practices for the Assembly, were discussed and agreed to.

On 20 February, the Scottish Parliament hosted the first Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities (CPwD) Forum. The Forum was attended by parliamentarians and officials from nine legislatures from across the region and included sessions on accessibility audits and how to encourage more people with disabilities to stand for election. Delegates also attended the Disability Summit on 21 February.

Also in February, the Parliament hosted an 80+ delegation of staff, including the Secretary General and senior management team, from the Parliament of Iceland (Althing). This unique visit provided an opportunity for a series of bilateral meetings between senior colleagues and included presentations from SPS officials on a number of topics.

First CPA BIMR CPwD Forum

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Operations and Digital Directorate

Facilities Management

The Space Planning Team continue to work closely with Business Information Technology (BIT) on the development of an online mapping system to coordinate local office closures and homeworking uplifts, supporting the commitment to make the election programme logistics operate as sustainably as possible. Alongside this, the team are progressing key pre-election workstreams, including condition surveys of furniture to enable a smooth and

efficient programme of repair, refurbishment and reallocation to new local offices after the election. They are also collaborating with BIT to collect IT equipment from local offices, reducing unnecessary travel by avoiding multiple journeys.

Business Information Technology

Mobile Device Report

The SPCB Mobile Device Policy includes a requirement to provide transparency of expenditure to the SPCB on a regular basis. The period covered by this report is the second (July-Sept) and third (Oct-Dec) quarters of Financial Year 25/26.

Quarter 2025/26 (July, August, September)

- The total cost incurred during the quarter was £5,269.09 which is a slight increase on the previous quarter costs (£5,113.93). The cost in the same quarter in FY 24/25 was £5,065.49.
- Average number of SIMs during the quarter was 686 (vs. 689 quarter 1).
- Average cost per SIM during Q2 was £2.56 per month (vs. £2.47 in quarter 1).

Quarter 3 202525/26 (October, November, December)

- The total cost incurred during quarter 3 was £5,020.25 (vs. £5,047.91 for the same quarter in the previous year).
- Average number of SIMs during the quarter was 676.
- Average cost per SIM during Q3 was £2.48 per month for the quarter.

All Parliament SIMs continue to operate under the terms and tariffs put in place as part of the mobile voice and data contract which became operational in February 2024. This includes additional technical controls including spend caps set on each SIM.

There were no cost exceptions to report during the period covered by this report and all costs remain within budget estimates.

Mobile Device Security

As part of the work to maintain and improve the cyber security of the SPCB IT Systems, the BIT Office is currently improving the security of mobile devices accessing Parliament systems.

All SPCB issued smartphones and tablets are being enrolled into the corporate mobile device management solution which will ensure the devices meet basic security standards and retain secure access to Parliament systems. Staff from the BIT Office have contacted users of corporate smartphones and tablets to explain the changes and what action is required. As a result of the work undertaken, 41% of the corporate devices how now been enrolled and work will continue to ensure all corporate devices

are enrolled as soon as practical. Personal devices used to access Parliament IT Systems will also require to be enrolled.

These changes to our cyber security posture are necessary to meet the baseline for cyber security being adopted by public sector organisations in the UK and will allow the SPCB to regain Cyber Essential Plus certification.

Inter-Parliamentary ICT Round Table

The Head of Digital Services recently hosted an Inter-Parliamentary ICT Round Table at Holyrood on February 9 and 10. This event, part of a series of roundtables for IT staff in Parliaments, brought together 60 attendees for two days of information sharing and discussion. Participants included members of the Parliament's Digital Services Team, as well as representatives from the UK Parliament, House of Oireachtas, Welsh Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly, Austria, Estonia, Guernsey, and Tynwald. Over the course of the event, attendees exchanged insights on various topics, including cyber security, IT resilience, Artificial Intelligence in Parliaments, and Digital Services for Members.

Q3 Performance Report (Oct–Dec 2025)

Parliamentary services continue to perform well. Several strategic change activities progressed positively this quarter. A small number of red-rated- KPIs and programmes reflect delays, resourcing challenges, or external events. These areas are known and being managed.

- **Member services and corporate functions performed well**. Parliamentary services were largely delivered to target; however, this is rated amber due to the targets for SPICE Enquiries (target 92%) and Official Report (target 90%) being narrowly missed by 2% and 4% respectively. This was mainly due to complexity of enquiries and increased business volumes.

- **Parliamentary Business; Voting disruption – Red:** Despite an overall performance of 97% of business taking place as scheduled, this is below our green threshold of 100%. A global Microsoft failure caused a delay in voting on Stage 3 of the Land Reform Bill. Voting was postponed to the following week. An incident review was completed to capture lessons learned and ensure the continued resilience and availability of parliamentary systems.

- **Corporate performance Highlights**
  - Supplier payments: 99.1% (target 99%).
  - No limited -assurance internal audit findings.
  - Carbon reduction at 77% (target 66%).
  - All compliance obligations reported as fulfilled
  - **Public engagement – Red:** Engagement (32% vs 68% target) continues to fall on X. Engagement remains strong elsewhere and is growing notably on LinkedIn. KPIs will be reviewed to align with the session 7 Public Engagement Strategy
  - **SPCB Staff Attendance – Amber:** Attendance at 95.1% (target 96%); linked to national seasonal illness. Attendance began to improve toward the end of Quarter 3 and trends will continue to be monitored

- **Strategic Change Highlights:**

  - Review of the Public Engagement Strategy progressed to timetable.
  - Several change projects, including the inclusive parliament review, official report transformation, building decarbonisation and shorter working hours moved forward as planned. Scottish Parliament election readiness work remains on track
  - **Corporate Systems Programme Phase 2 - Red**; work on strengthening workforce and business data links continues, however new milestones have been added and a date for a full business case is to be agreed.
  - **Parliament of the Future – Red:** interim milestones slipped due to other work pressures but session 7 planning remains overall on track.
  - **Cyber Security and Disaster Recovery– Red:** timelines extended to December 2026 due to increase in project scope.
  - **Conveners Group– Red:** project milestone moved into session 7 due to end of session workload pressures.

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Performance Report

2025-26 Q3: October to December 2025

Performance overview

Our services	KPI status	Trend[1]	Strategic change objectives	Key activity status	Trend
Members support and resources	Green	No change	A modern, dynamic parliamentary democracy	Amber	No change 2nd quarter
Scrutiny and debate	Red	Declined	Adapting for a sustainable future	Amber	Declined
Public involvement	Amber	No change 2nd quarter	A values-driven culture	Amber	No change 2nd quarter
Corporate services and governance	Green	No change	Operational excellence	Red	No change 3rd quarter
Working environment	Amber	Declined			

[1] Trend is compared to last quarter, Q2 2025-26

Delivering excellence in our parliamentary services: key performance indicators

Members services and resources
Overall status: **Green**

Measure	Target	Result	Trend	Exceptions
Core Members' services operating within targets	On track	**On track**	No change	SPICe enquiries answered in accordance within agreed timescales (target 92% answered to deadline requested): **Amber** - achieved 90% Delays were mainly due to enquiries waiting on third-party input and a marked increase in more complex enquiries requiring researcher involvement. Researcher-handled enquiries rose from 38% in September to 48% in December 2025. Combined with competing priorities and high committee workload this led to some responses being issued after the deadline. Performance continues to be monitored and mitigations are in place.

Scrutiny and debate
Overall status: **Red**

Measure	Target	Result	Trend	Exceptions
Parliamentary business takes place as scheduled	No disruption	**Business Lost**	Declined	Voting functioning as required (target 100%): **Red** - achieved 97% One of the 29 planned voting days in Q3 did not proceed due to a global Microsoft Azure outage on 29 October 2025. The issue arose from a flawed supplier configuration change, affecting numerous organisations using Microsoft services. Although the supplier responded within 15 minutes, full-service restoration took several hours and voting was postponed to the following week. An internal major incident review was completed to capture lessons learned and ensure the continued resilience and availability of parliamentary systems. Level of disruption to chamber or committee business (target no disruption): **Red** with Business Lost

Measure	Target	Result	Trend	Exceptions
	   			The Chamber voting issue resulted in the suspension of Stage 3 proceedings for the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill. Parliamentary business was rescheduled to 4 November 2025.
Parliamentary business services operating within targets	On track	**Not on track**	Declined	Legislation documents are produced in accordance with agreed timescales (target 100%): **Amber** achieved 99% A revised Explanatory Notes document was published one day later than required by Standing Orders. Although the Scottish Government provided the draft the day before the deadline, publication was delayed due to the concurrent amendment deadline, which required the Legislation Team to prioritise the extensive Marshalled List and Groupings documents. No further action is required. Committee OR produced within agreed timescales (target 90%): **Amber** achieved 86% Public parliamentary business levels remained exceptionally high in Q3, averaging 44h 25m per week compared with 35h 04m for Q3 in 2024 (27% increase). Increased chamber and committee activity, including late Chamber sittings, required prioritisation of Chamber ORs, which in turn affected committee OR publication timescales.

Public Involvement
Overall status: **Amber**

Measure	Target	Result	Trend	Exceptions
Public feedback surveys	On track	**On track**	No change	
Digital engagement	On track	**Not on track** 2nd quarter	No change	Social media channels meet bespoke engagement rates (target 68%): **Red** – achieved 32% Engagement on X continues to decline. Because the Parliament operates multiple X accounts, results are skewed when compared with single account platforms. Engagement remains strong elsewhere and is growing notably on LinkedIn. X now functions more effectively as a broadcast channel than an engagement tool. The new social media strategy for Session 7, supported by updated channel strategies, will reflect this shift in the digital landscape and include new KPIs.

Corporate services & governance
Overall status: **Green**

Measure	Target	Result	Trend	Exceptions
% Outturn against SPCB budget for financial year[1] year to date (YTD)	0-.25% under budget	**1.4% YTD**	No change	Note, the overall KPI is green. Members' overspend is offset by SPS underspend, with project delays and other factors contributing to lower than planned in-year project spend. Further detail is provided in the Finance report.
Corporate payment performance	99%	**99.1%**	No change	
Internal audit reports (limited or no assurance opinions)	0	**0**	No change	Note, there were no reporting updates during Q3. Next meeting January 2026.

Measure	Target	Result	Trend	Exceptions
Fulfilment of compliance obligations	Compliant	**Compliant**	No change	
Reduction in carbon dioxide emissions compared to 2005-06 baseline[1]	66%	**77% YTD**	No change	

![icon] Working environment
Overall status: Amber

Measure	Target	Result	Trend	Exceptions
SPCB staff turnover[1]	10%	**4.9% YTD**	No change	Q3 result 0.6%
SPCB staff attendance rate	96%	**95.1%**	Declined	SPCB staff attendance rates declined in Q3 due to a 50% rise in minor illness related absence compared with Q2 (from 4,405 to 6,606 hours). This reflects national increases in cold and flu absence over the same period. Attendance began to improve toward the end of Q3 and trends will continue to be monitored, with targeted support provided as required.
SPCB staff unplanned absence rate	<4%	**4.1%**	Declined	
Culture of respect complaints	0	**0**		

[1] Cumulative year to date (YTD) figures

Strategic change objectives: key activities

Status definitions

A red, amber, green status (RAG) sets out the overall performance against the project, programme or activities time, cost, people and change resources, and outcomes and benefits:

Indicator	Red	Amber	Green
Time	Milestone(s) and/or activity completion date delayed by more than one month	Milestone(s) and/or activity completion date delayed by up to one month	Milestones and activity completion date remains on schedule
Cost/Budget	Costs exceed approved budget for current financial year and/or overall agreed activity cost by more than 5% or over £50,000. For multiyear projects, if overall budget remains unchanged, then in-year changes within the portfolio budget agreed by the Investment Advisory Group (IAG) can be considered Amber.	Costs exceed approved budget for current financial year and/or overall agreed activity cost up to 5% or a maximum of £50,000	Current approved budget and overall agreed activity cost is on target
People and Change Resources	Lack of resources to deliver activity impacting ability to meet activity plan.	Risk to resources as not yet committed and is being managed	Resources committed and plans in place.
Outcomes and benefits	Significant change in outcomes and/or benefits are not or highly unlikely to be delivered.	Risk of / or minor changes in outcomes and/or delivering benefits	Outcomes and benefits will be delivered in line with business case and benefits plan
Overall	**Red** if one or more indicators are red or If one or more indicators are reported as Amber for the 3rd consecutive quarter	**Amber** if one or more indicators are amber and none are red	**Green** if all indicators are green.

If there are any issues and/or risks either addressed during the reporting quarter or are currently being addressed and remedial action taken, the activity must be reported as Amber or Red.

A modern, dynamic parliamentary democracy
Overall status: **Amber**

Key activity	Q3 completed milestones	Overall status	Trend
Conveners Group Session 6 Priorities Callum Thomson Senior Responsible Owner (SRO): Irene Fleming End date: May 2026	N/a	**Red**	Declined
Exceptions: **Red** – Timescales – The milestone for the Conveners Group and Scottish Government to review and agree a revised protocol on the handling of committee business has been rescheduled from December 2025 to December 2027. This change reflects the transition to a new Minister for Parliamentary Business and Parliamentary Veterans alongside end-of-session workload pressures. The revised timeline may also be influenced by factors such as the Minister in post and the prioritisation of business on the Conveners Group agenda in the new session.			
Public Engagement Strategy Review Lead/SRO: Lorna Hunter End date: June 2026	Delivered an engagement session with PES staff by December 2025 - Office Heads engaged their teams.	**Green**	Improved
Public Service Delivery Lead/SRO: Lorna Hunter End date: February 2026	• Completed the review of public service delivery by October 2025, covering public engagement service teams, delivery methods, the shop, and the proposed educational subsidy. Confirmed no business case for the subsidy (shared with SPCB and Parliament), ensured all improvements - including the deliberative blueprint -can be delivered within existing resources, and aligned shop changes with engagement objectives, future priorities, operational efficiency, and financial viability.	**Amber**	Declined
Exceptions: **Amber** – Timescales - The milestone for the 'SPCB discussion paper on public service delivery', has moved from January to February 2026. The SPCB will now also be invited to sign off the revised retail policy, this resulted in the short delay.			

Key activity	Q3 completed milestones	Overall status	Trend
Scottish Parliament Elections 2026 David McGill SRO: Allan Campbell End date: October 2026	• SET agreed outline business case in October 2025. • SPCB Election Guidance for Members issued in November 2025.	**Green**	No change

Adapting for a sustainable future

Overall status: **Amber**

Key activity	Q3 completed milestones	Overall status	Trend
Building Decarbonisation Programme - Strategic building infrastructure investments Lynsey Hamill SRO: Alan Durward End date: March 2026 for investment decision	• N/a	**Green**	No change
Parliament of the Future Michelle Hegarty SRO: William Heigh End date: April 2027	• SET shared draft Session 7 strategic plan and next steps with the Leadership Engagement Network in December 2025.	**Red**	Declined
Exceptions: **Red** – timescales – The milestone to share the draft Session 7 strategic plan with the Leadership Engagement Network and provide a high-level update to the wider SPS by October 2025 was delayed to allow further refinement of the draft. This ensured Director feedback was incorporated and that priorities were presented in a clear and consistent format. The draft strategy was shared with LEN in December, with an update to the wider organisation at the All-Staff Event in January 2026.			

A values-driven culture
Overall status: **Amber**

Key activity	Q3 completed milestones	Overall status	Trend
Inclusive Parliament Review Programme Lead/SRO Lorna Hunter End date: August 2026	• Director of People, Communications and Inclusion approved Inclusive Parliament Review Programme Brief in November 2025. • Director of People, Communications and Inclusion agreed consultation approach on the provision of services and facilities at Holyrood and parliamentary culture, policies and practices in December 2025.	**Amber**	No change

Exceptions: **Amber** – Milestones have been extended slightly to allow a fuller review of the programme brief, further discussion on the proposed approach to stakeholder consultation and reprioritisation of work to ensure compliance with the new preventative duty under the Worker Protection Act. Revised timings are: approval of the programme brief moved from October to November 2025, agreement on the consultation approach from November to December 2025, and completion of consultation from February to March 2026. Good progress has been made, including staff surveys, engagement with trade unions and equality groups, legal discussions, and early drafting of the SPCB report, ensuring the review remains robust, inclusive and aligned with legislative requirements. Indicative timescales remain subject to the updated EHRC code of practice, which must be laid before Parliament for 40 days following ministerial approval before it becomes statutory guidance.

Operational excellence
Overall status: **Red**

Key activity	Q3 completed milestones	Overall status	Trend
Workforce Planning - Shorter Working Hours Lorna Hunter SRO: Neil Mackie End date: March 2026	• N/a	**Green**	No change
Corporate Systems Programme Phase 1b Kerry Twyman SRO: James Vinestock End date: July 2026	N/a	**Red - paused until June 2026**	No change
Exceptions: **Red** (paused) - timescales – The programme was paused until January and this pause has now been extended to June 2026. The revised timeline is dependent on the Scottish Government's delivery plan and timelines for the enterprise performance management (workforce planning) element of work.			
Corporate Systems Programme Phase 2 Lead & SRO: Lorna Hunter End date: December 2026	• Intranet improvements delivered, including enhanced Popular Tasks and What's on, a refreshed homepage, improved navigation, and new Members' Guide and Resources section to improving usability and access to services and information by December 2025.	**Red**	N/A
Exceptions: **Red** - Timescales – A discrete piece of work is underway to strengthen the links between workforce and business data. An additional milestone has been added to identify options for integrating people, pay and business data, extending the completion of Phase 2 from March to December 2026. This will support delivery of the Session 7 strategy and inform the refreshed Workforce Plan in April 2027. Work is progressing although a timescale for the overall project business case has not yet been agreed.			

Key activity	Q3 completed milestones	Overall status	Trend
Official Report Digital Transformation Programme Callum Thomson SRO: Tracey White End date: February 2026	OR production system went live in December 2025.	**Amber**	No change
Exceptions: **Amber** - Timescales – The go-live milestone for the new OR production system, originally scheduled for November was achieved in December 2025. Full rollout is now expected by January 2026. The delay was due to resource constraints and the need for additional testing and integration in the final phase. There is no cost impact and all required resources are now in place to support rollout and the transition to business as usual service.			
Business Bulletin Improvements Callum Thomson/Lynsey Hamill SRO: Catherine Fergusson End date: February 2025 (updated to be in line with project closure report as planned)	• Completed technical build and test in October 2025. • Went live with replacement business bulletin in October 2025.	**Green**	No change
Windows 10 Upgrade Lynsey Hamill SRO: Alan Balharrie End date: October 2025	• The project closure report was approved by the Project Board in October and endorsed by BIT Portfolio Management Board in November. • The project delivered on plan, under budget, and achieved its intended outcomes and benefits.	**Completed**	No change
Cyber Security Lynsey Hamill SRO: Alan Balharrie	• IAG approved Firewall replacement business case in October 2025. • SPCB approved Acceptable Use of IT Policy in November 2025.	**Red**	N/A – new reporting

Key activity	Q3 completed milestones	Overall status	Trend
End date: December 2026		 	arrangements
Exceptions: <mark style="background:red">Red</mark> - Timescales – The completion date for the IT Disaster Recovery Improvement project has moved from April to December 2026 to reflect updated project planning and an expanded scope. The original timeline covered only the initial chamber-systems phase due to complete by March 2026. Subsequent phases, which were always intended but not previously reported, now include disaster recovery activity for other BIT-developed systems, with critical broadcasting systems to support chamber business added in Q3. The revised December 2026 date reflects delivery of all phases, including completion and approval of the project closure report. <mark style="background:orange">Amber</mark> - People and change resources - While most workstreams are resourced, the expanded project scope requires updated replanning and resource profiling to ensure sufficient capacity is in place to deliver all workstreams within the revised scope.			
Business Continuity – Loss of IT Kerry Twyman SRO: Tommy Lynch End date: April 2026	• Started in December 2025.	<mark style="background:orange">**Amber**</mark>	N/A – new reporting arrangements
Exceptions: <mark style="background:orange">Amber</mark> - People and Change resources - The main constraint is the availability of staff across business areas. Although participants recognise the importance of the work, it may not be possible to schedule activities at times that suit all teams. Participants may need to balance this alongside other time-sensitive commitments and Directors may need to reinforce the priority of the Loss of IT work.			
Lobbying Register David McGill SRO: Billy McLaren End date: October 2026	• N/a	<mark style="background:green">**Green**</mark>	Improved
Chamber Dias Accessibility Callum Thomson SRO: Tracey White End date: May 2026	• SPCB reviewed and supported the project in October 2025. • Full business case approved by IAG and SET in December 2025.	<mark style="background:green">**Green**</mark>	No change

Key activity	Q3 completed milestones	Overall status	Trend
Committee Room Consoles Replacement Callum Thomson SRO: Irene Fleming End date: August 2027	• Estimated milestones agreed by December 2025.	**Amber**	NEW
Exceptions: **Amber** - Timescales, cost, outcomes and benefits - Final delivery dates, costs and benefits will be confirmed following receipt and evaluation of contractor submissions. Early market engagement indicates the proposed timescales are achievable. Expected outcomes and benefits are set out clearly in the contractor brief and will be finalised once bids are aligned with available budget.			
Fire safety improvements Kerry Twyman SRO: Tommy Lynch End date: March 2029	• Milestones agreed by December 2025.	**Green**	NEW

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Scottish Parliament

Q3 SPCB Summary Financial Report

1 April 2025 to 31 December 2025

Contents

1. SPCB Overview

1.1   Year to date variance and forecast out-turn

	2025-26 Full-Year forecast				Year to Date			
	Forecast Out-turn	Current Annual Budget	Variance	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Parliamentary Service Costs	67,393	67,899	506	0.7%	48,189	49,893	1,705	3.4%
Members Costs	45,044	45,567	523	1.1%	33,609	32,810	(799)	(2.4%)
Commissioners & Ombudsman Costs	21,524	21,753	229	1.1%	16,025	16,431	405	2.5%
Sub Total	**133,961**	**135,219**	**1,258**	**0.9%**	**97,823**	**99,134**	**1,311**	**1.3%**
Reserves – SPCB contingency Contingency pressure	725	1,317	592	44.9%	-	-	-	-
Total SPCB Expenditure	**134,686**	**136,536**	**1,850**	**1.4%**	**97,823**	**99,134**	**1,311**	**1.3%**

Total year to date expenditure is £97.8 million against a budget of £99.1 million, resulting in an underspend of £1.3 million (1.3%) as at the end of December. This variance is within the Q3 performance target of 2.5%. The underspend to date has been driven by slower than expected spend in Parliamentary Service projects, offset by earlier than anticipated spending by Members.

Project spend is expected to recover in the last quarter as projects are progressed. Similarly, members' expenditure moves back into an underspend position as timing differences are smoothed out against budget phasing. As a result, forecast for the year-end is an underspend of £1.9 million (1.4%).

2. Parliamentary Service (SPS)

2.1   Year to date variance and forecast out-turn

	2025-26				Year to Date			
	Forecast Out-turn	Current Annual Budget	Variance	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Staff	43,214	43,121	(93)	(0.2%)	32,270	32,100	(170)	(0.5%)
Staff Related Costs	813	879	66	7.5%	517	688	171	24.9%
Property Costs	9,684	9,824	139	1.4%	7,084	7,404	321	4.3%
Running Costs	7,588	7,685	97	1.3%	5,435	5,490	55	1.0%
Projects	6,093	6,391	298	4.7%	2,884	4,211	1,328	31.5%
SPS Expenditure	**67,393**	**67,899**	**506**	**0.7%**	**48,189**	**49,893**	**1,705**	**3.4%**

2.2   Staff Costs

The expectation is that Parliamentary staff costs will be overspent by around £0.093 million by the year end due to small shortfalls in vacancy gap recoveries.

2.3   Staff related costs

Staff related costs are £0.171 million under budget at the end of Q3 and this underspend is forecast to reduce to £0.066 million by the end of the year. The underspend is being driven by lower than forecast travel costs and lower than expected training costs. Training spend is forecast to catch up in the new year.

2.4   Property costs

Property costs are £0.321 million underspent at the end of Q3 and this underspend is expected to reduce slightly to £0.139 million by the end of the year. Around half of the year-to-date variance is due to lower-than-expected utility costs and so, with the agreement of FM, £0.300 million of the utilities budget has been returned to contingency funds. Maintenance spend is currently around £0.094 million underspent and this underspend is expected to reduce slightly towards the end of the year.

2.5   Running costs

Running costs are £0.055 million underspent in the year to date and this is forecast to increase slightly in the last quarter resulting in a projected underspend of £0.097 million by the year-end with various minor over and underspends across multiple business areas.

2.6   Projects

Portfolio	2025-26				Year to Date			
	Forecast Outturn	Current Annual Budget	Variance	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
BIT and Digital	1,922	1,989	67	3.4%	891	1,674	784	46.8%
FM Building & Equipment	1,817	1,854	36	2.0%	769	1,019	250	24.5%
BEMS	577	578	1	0.3%	577	578	1	0.3%
Broadcasting	256	240	(16)	-6.7%	1	0	-1	0.0%
Other	730	753	23	3.1%	422	485	63	13.0%
Election	667	777	110	14.2%	225	455	230	50.6%
Unallocated budget	125	200	75	37.6%	0	0	0	0.0%
Coding Errors	0	0	0	0.0%	0	0	0	0.0%
Total projects	**6,093**	**6,391**	**298**	**4.7%**	**2,884**	**4,211**	**1,328**	**31.5%**
Categories:	Forecast Outturn	Current Annual Budget	Variance	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance
Capital projects	1,056	1,006	(50)	-5.0%	621	834	213	25.5%
Revenue projects	5,038	5,385	347	6.5%	2,263	3,377	1,115	33.0%
Unallocated budget								
Total projects	**6,093**	**6,391**	**298**	**4.7%**	**2,884**	**4,211**	**1,328**	**31.5%**

Project spend is £1.328 million behind where we expected it to be by the end of Q3 of the year but is expected to catch up in the final quarter of the year to a forecast £0.298 million underspend.

The bulk of the year-to-date underspend is in BIT and Digital projects which are currently running at £0.784 million behind plan. However, there are now over £0.660 million of purchase orders raised which underpins the £1.9 million of forecast spend.

3. Members & Officeholders spend

## 3.1 Members spend to date and forecast outturn

Members expenses remain higher than forecast by the end of quarter three. However, this is due mainly to the timing of purchases – particularly on engagement materials and staff costs. This budget phasing issue is expected to reverse in the final quarter as spend reduces towards the end of the session. We are currently forecasting an underspend of £0.523 million at the year-end which is in line with the outturn of the last two financial years.

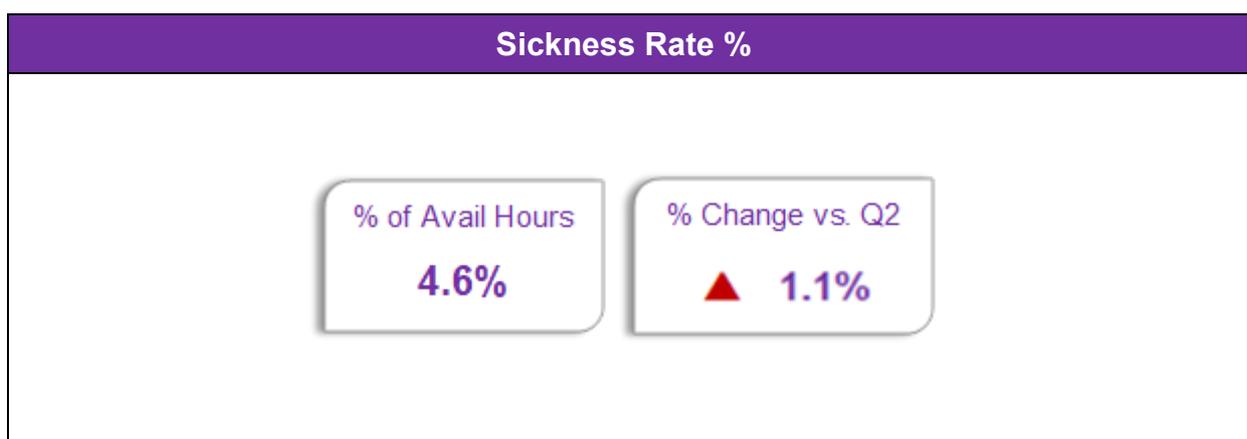## 3.2 Officeholders spend to date and forecast outturn

Officeholders have underspent by £0.405 million at the end of quarter three and this is due mainly to timing of court cases which are scheduled in the last quarter of the year and will affect the spending patterns within the Public Services Ombudsman.   We have been advised that the year-to-date underspend in the Public Services Ombudsman will be recovered, and their budget fully utilised. The current year-end forecast is for a £0.229 million underspend for Officeholders.
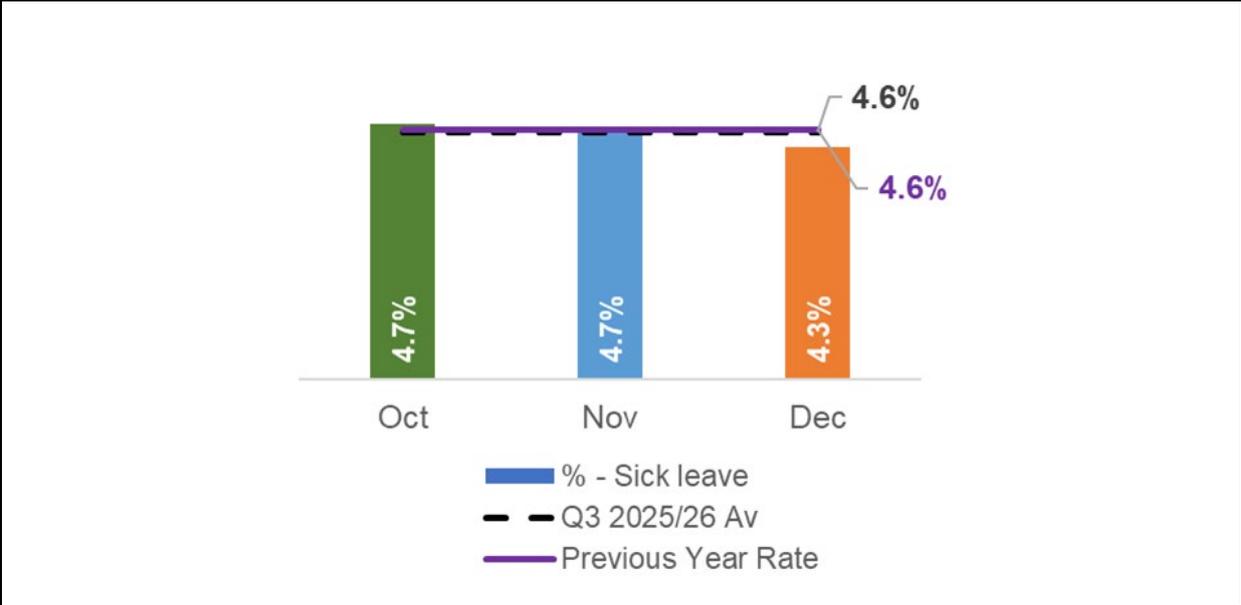
Quarter 3 2025/26 Workforce Report

Attendance

Attendance Rate %	
Average for Quarter	% Change from Q2
95.1%	▼ **1.1%**
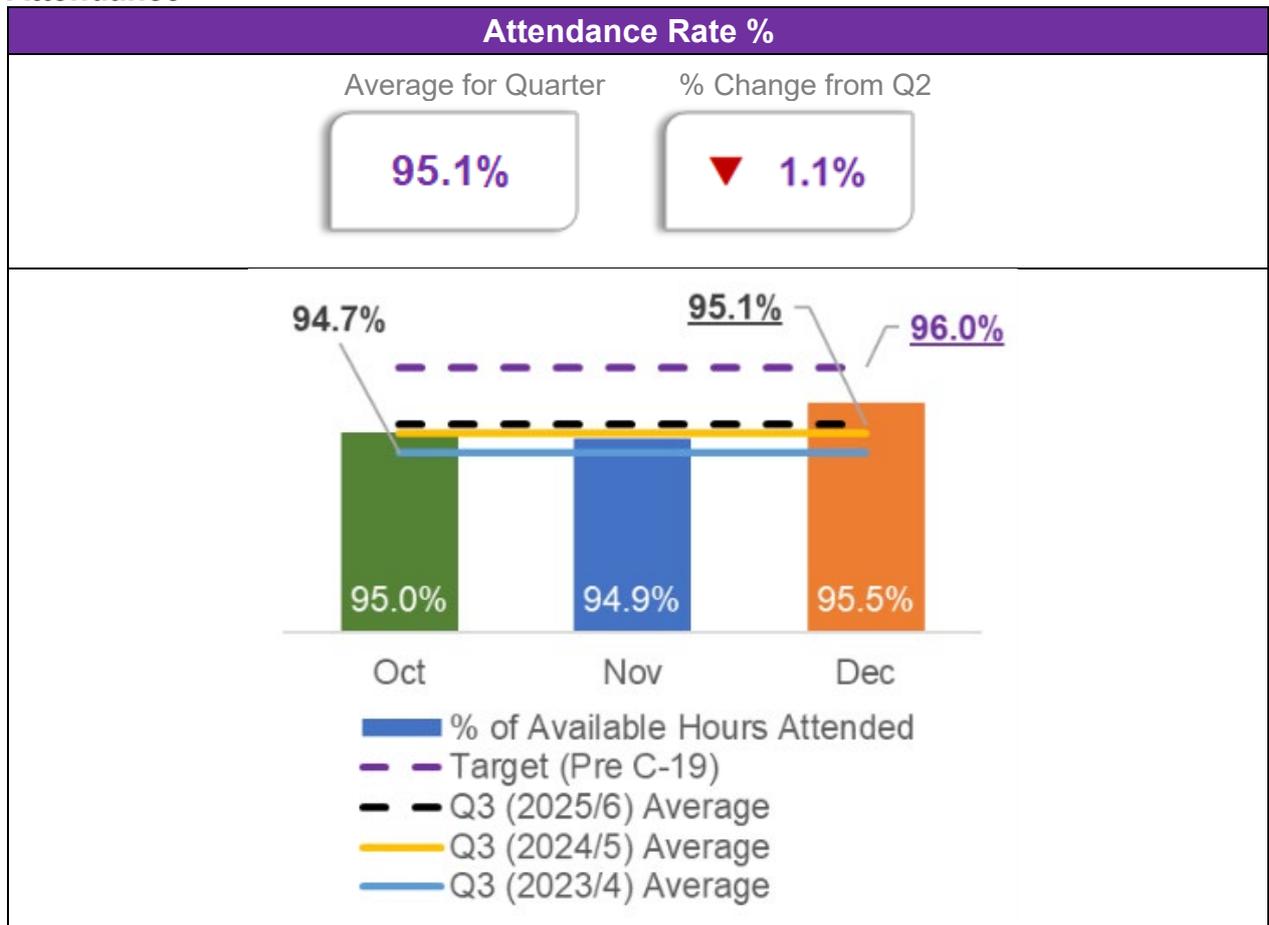
The Attendance Rate was 95.1% which was a decrease on the previous Quarter.
The Attendance Rate for the same period in 2024/25 was similar at 95%.

Sickness Rate %	
% of Avail Hours	% Change vs. Q2
4.6%	▲ **1.1%**

Sickness Categories

GP Fit Note	Self Cert
62.5%	**37.5%**

- Operation and Post-Operative Recovery
- Other/Multiple
- Acute Medical Conditions
- Recurring Medical Conditions
- Musculoskeletal Conditions
- Mental Health, Stress and Fatigue Syndromes
- Minor Illness

The Sickness Absence rate has increased on the previous Quarter, up 1.1 percentage points to 4.6%. This is the same absence rate as Quarter 3 in the previous year. The largest proportion of sickness absence continues to be due to Minor Illness.

Turnover

Cumulative Turnover – To End Q3

4.9%
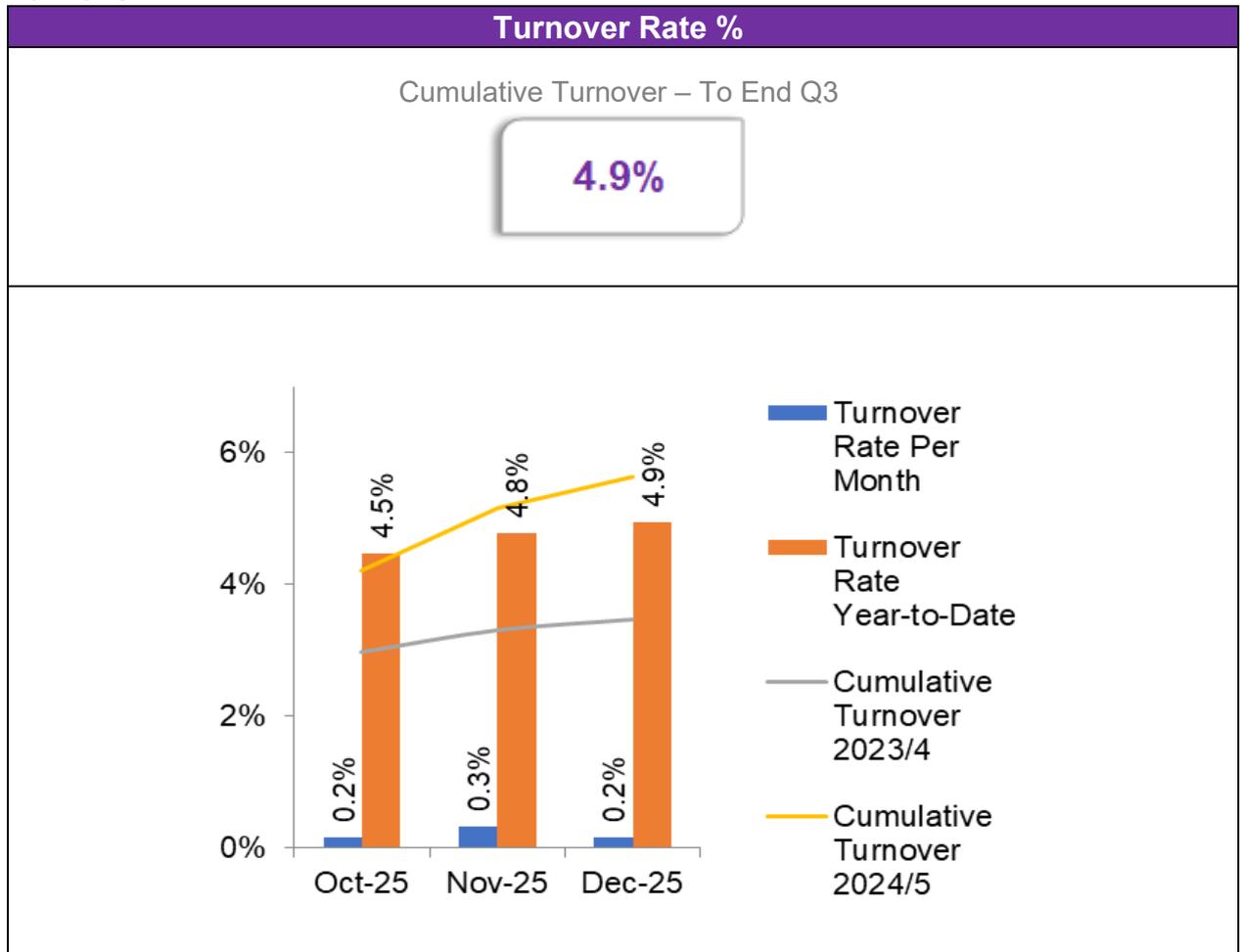
The Turnover Rate for this Quarter was 0.7% bringing the cumulative total for the year so far to 4.9%. In the same period last year the Turnover Rate was 2.1%. There were 4 Leavers in Quarter 3 and the average headcount across the period was 630.

Recruitment

In accordance with our commitment to increase the diversity of our organisation and our focus on increasing applications from minority ethnic backgrounds, we monitor the progress of success rates at interview and appointment stage.

Recruitment
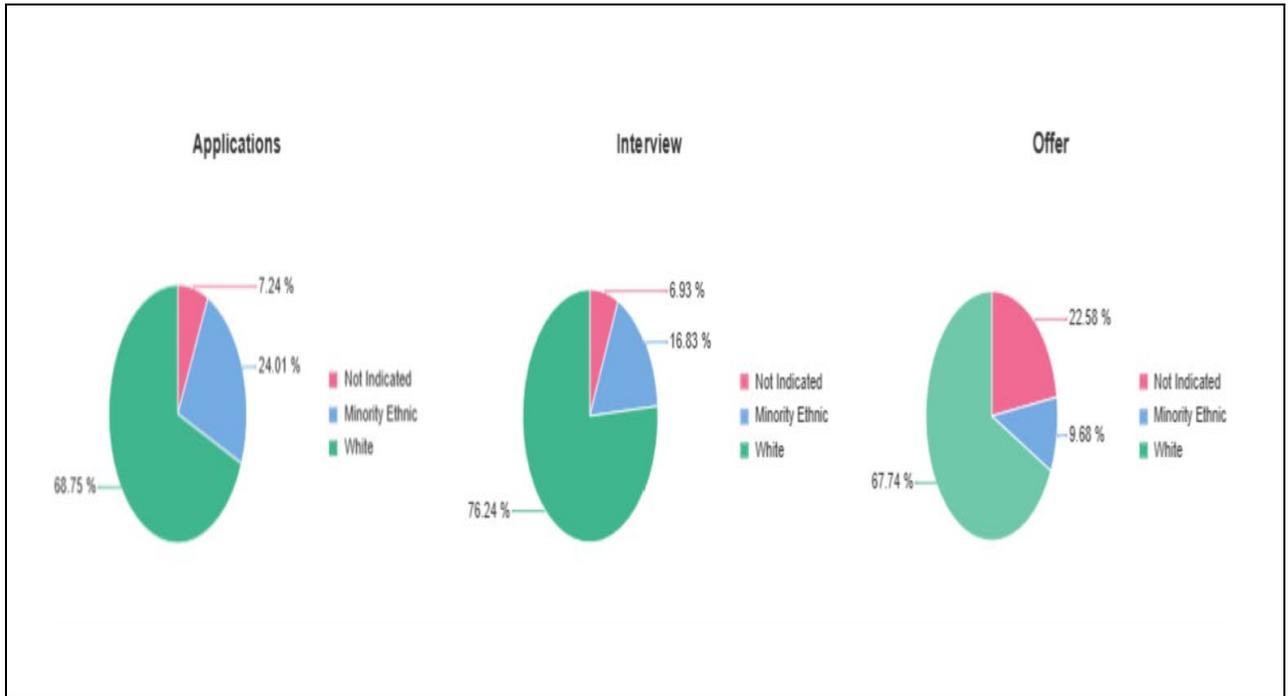
Twenty three recruitment campaigns were concluded in Quarter 3. Of the 31 appointments made, 3 were candidates from a minority ethnic background.