

# April 2023 Quarterly SMT Minutes

## MEETING: Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023, Progressive House, Belfast

**In Attendance:**

Margaret Kelly – Ombudsman; MK  
 Sean Martin – Deputy Ombudsman; SM  
 Andrew Ruston - Head of Communications; AR  
 Corinne Nelson – Director of Investigations; CN  
 Julie Healy - Head of Improvement, Engagement & Impact, JH  
 Sarah Sherry – Secretariat; SS

Agenda Item	Minutes	Action Required/ By Whom
1.	<p><b>Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</b></p> <p>No Apologies</p> <p>MK invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda. No conflicts were noted.</p> <p>SMT congratulated CN on her permanent position as Director of Investigations.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes of the last meeting</b></p> <p>Minutes from 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023 were agreed as a true and accurate record.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Outstanding Actions</b></p> <p><i>NIPSO Code of Conduct</i> –AR to get costings for design and print.</p> <p><i>Contract Database</i> – to be put in the May agenda.</p> <p><i>Reasonable Adjustments Policy</i>- agreed with a review date of 2028 – AR to send SS the word document.</p> <p><i>CS Soft Launch</i> – Long Gallery booked for the 28<sup>th</sup> June.</p> <p><i>Councillor Code of Conduct</i> –An agreement was made for MK and SM to meet with local parties after the elections.</p> <p><i>Information Governance Policies</i> – MK to ensure circulation of policies to SMT.</p>	<p>AR – costings for Code of Conduct</p> <p>SS – Contract Database – May Agenda</p> <p>MK – ask GS to circulate.</p>
4	<p><b>New Website Demonstration</b></p> <p>AR presented the most recent version of the new website to SMT.</p> <p>SMT agreed that it was an excellent draft</p>	

5	<b>Internal Audit and Follow Up Review</b> SS/MK/SM to look at the recommendations and allocate tasks to SMT	SS/MK/SM – allocate recommendations
6 + 7	<b>22/23 and 23/24 Business/Operational Plans</b> SS to share links with SMT to update both plans before 17 <sup>th</sup> April	SS – Share links to SMT, to update
8	<b>NIPSO Risk Register</b> Discussion took place regarding the main risks to NIPSO.	SS – Update risk register
9	<b>Corporate Policy Database</b> SS to send MK the policies that require updating for review	SS – Share policies with MK
10	<b>Quarterly Sickness Absence</b> 3.29% from January to March. YK to provide a yearly total for the annual report	
11	<b>Quarterly Audit Recommendations Update</b> SMT looked at the Audit Recommendations.	SS – update
12	<b>MAL and OI Update</b> <b>Assist</b> CN took the meeting through the most recent statistics and KPI's. SJ has been appointed from the recent external recruitment exercise and is due to start post in the Assist team on the 13 <sup>th</sup> April 23. <b>OI</b> JH highlighted the main themes from the Planning Days and Ongoing Scoping by OI Team. SS/JH to arrange a focus SMT meeting on future OIs. OI report was taken to be read.	SS/JH – arrange an OI meeting
13 + 14	<b>LGES Update</b> SM updated SMT on the latest statistics from LGES. <i>Adjudications</i> – 3 cases waiting for adjudication - the scheduling is affected by Purdah.	
15	<b>Complaints Standards Update</b> The CS team met for the 3 <sup>rd</sup> and final time with Local Government stakeholders to consider the final draft version of the MCHP documents during operational and strategic network meetings on 15 <sup>th</sup> and 22 <sup>nd</sup> March respectively. SM encouraged SMT to read and provide comments on the Support and Intervention Guide and Policy.	SMT – comments on CS documents SS – May agenda

16	<p><b>Financial and Corporate Services Update</b></p> <p><i>Finance – No paper presented. Paper to be discussed next week at finance SMT</i></p> <p><i>Corporate Services report was taken as read.</i></p>	
17	<p><b>Communications</b></p> <p><i>Information Governance – A revised timetable has been set for a new file structure to be agreed upon for those remaining office functions yet to be moved to the N Drive</i></p> <p><i>Media Monitoring – Agreement was made that this service be procured.</i></p> <p><i>Ombudsman and Commissioner’s Report – has been laid in the Assembly and is available on the website.</i></p> <p><i>AR set up a timetable setting out the proposed sequencing of notable publications for the coming months.</i></p>	
18	<p><b>Improvement, Engagement, and Impact Report</b></p> <p>JH provided a summary of her update.</p> <p>SMT agreed with the Equality Monitoring Process flow chart.</p> <p><i>The Workshop on Vulnerability will take place on the 27<sup>th</sup> June, approx. 40 invited participants from the public and V + C sectors. A mix of research and evidence input from Dr Chris Gill and Naomi Creutzfeldt and workshops to hear about good practice and challenges.</i></p> <p>SMT to suggest possible invites and forward to JH.</p> <p><i>Asylum Seekers – ongoing and under active consideration for a potential OI. Training on immigration law and practice on 15<sup>th</sup> March with the Law Centre was very successful, 30 staff attended.</i></p> <p><i>Engagement Survey Update– JH to send out the summary to staff in advance of the staff briefings.</i></p>	<p>MK – Funding email to Chris Gill</p> <p>SMT – Invite suggestions</p>
15	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>SS asked that all SMT complete the Annual Leave Spreadsheet when requesting annual leave from SM or MK</p>	
16	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 3pm at Progressive House</b></p>	