



Portfolio Sponsor Meeting

Date of Meeting	13 January 2025
Time	14:00 – 15:30
Location	Virtual / St Andrew's House
Chair	Louise Macdonald, DG Communities
Apologies	Miriam Craven

Attendees

Members

Louise Macdonald (LM)	DG Communities – Chair and Portfolio Sponsor
David Wallace (DW)	Chief Executive, Social Security Scotland
Ally MacPhail (AMP)	Deputy Director Organisational Strategy and Performance, Social Security Scotland
Stephanie Devenny (SD)	Deputy Director, Finance and Corporate Services, Social Security Scotland
Chris Creegan (CC)	Non-executive, Social Security Scotland
Manish Joshi (MJ)	Non-executive, Scottish Government
Andy McClintock	Chief Digital Information Officer

Secretariat

AMG	Governance Manager, Social Security Scotland
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Attendees

FC	DG Communities Governance and Strategy Lead
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Observer

EB	DG Head of Portfolio Management Office
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1. Welcome

- 1.1. LM welcomed all members for the first Portfolio Sponsor meeting of 2025.
- 1.2. Actions from previous meeting were noted and updates provided as appropriate.

Action : LM has asked for open risk actions to be reviewed and rationalised where possible, to avoid duplication.

- 1.3. LM highlighted the need for future updates on the subject of transition arrangements. AMP suggested that this topic could be included under future performance and risk updates at Portfolio Sponsor meetings.

Action: next meeting to include updates on transition arrangements under performance and risk item in relation to her sponsorship role. LM asked for any relevant risks to be discussed at the next DGC risk panel.

2. Horizon Scanning and Emerging Issues

- 2.1. LM highlighted several key awareness topics, including the ongoing budgetary pressures for 2025/26, alongside the anticipated impact of the increase in employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) from April 2025.
- 2.2. LM drew attention to the ongoing Public Services Reform activities led by Mr McKee, Minister for Public Finance. Louise noted the opportunity for Social Security Scotland to showcase the reform initiatives already undertaken and outline future planned steps.

Action : Social Security Scotland to identify and outline the Public Services Reform activities being undertaken / planned.

- 2.3. DW provided an update on planned business planning activities, in addition to emphasising current IT and data challenges.

3. Performance Update

- 3.1. MJ noted that Average Working Days Lost (AWDL) figures have remained relatively static within the Balanced Scorecard. DW and AMP highlighted the introduction of the People Plan, which will be utilised by Deputy Directors to monitor and address AWDL figures within their respective divisions.
- 3.2. AMP provided an update on the Future Model project, emphasising the need to maintain momentum in this critical work. LM requested assurance that all Future Model project risks are identified and mitigated. AMP advised that a dedicated project sits behind all Future Model activities and all risks will be managed and shared.

Action : Future model activities and risks to be shared with Director General for awareness

- 3.3. AMP provided an overview of the Digital Maturity Assessment currently underway. Output from this assessment is expected in March 2025.
- 3.4. Members discussed the completion rate and overall engagement index scores from the recent People Survey.
- 3.5. AMP noted that a meeting with GD and the DG Policy team is scheduled for next week to discuss the Corporate Appointee process.
- 3.6. Business plan and impact of National Insurance Contributions were also discussed.

4. Risk Update

- 4.1. AMP presented an overview of the strategic risk register and noted key risks approaching or exceeding tolerance levels.
- 4.2. Members discussed the addition of a risk item to be added to the DG risk register, noting that much work has been undertaken and general agreement regarding agreed text, controls and mitigations.
- 4.3. AMP noted ongoing engagement with Audit Scotland on identifying their 25/26 audit focus.
- 4.4. Members discussed the latest status regarding the planned governance stress test conducted by Public Bodies Unit.

Action : FC and AMG to arrange further discussion with Public Bodies contact to agree scheduling.

5. Finance Update

- 5.1. SGL presented the November Finance Report agenda item.
- 5.2. An update was provided on current spending controls, benefit expenditure and the 25/26 budget.

6. Any Other Business

- 7.1 LM requested that we are clear on the governance roles in relation to the future model project, being clear on the touchpoints and ensuring Governance includes DG key decision points.

Action : Social Security Scotland to clarify and communicate governance roles and responsibilities including decision points across 2025.

- 7.2 DG Communities asked DW to confirm that there were no other critical matters that she should be aware of. DW noted there were none.