



Portfolio Sponsor Meeting

Date of Meeting	30 October 2024
Time	14:00 – 15:30
Location	Virtual / St Andrew's House
Chair	Louise Macdonald, DG Communities

Attendees

Members

Louise Macdonald (LM)	DG Communities – Chair and Portfolio Sponsor
David Wallace (DW)	Chief Executive, Social Security Scotland
Miriam Craven (MC)	Chief Operations Officer, Social Security Scotland
Ally MacPhail (AMP)	Deputy Director Organisational Strategy and Performance, Social Security Scotland
Stephanie Glavin (SGL)	Deputy Director, Finance and Corporate Services, Social Security Scotland
Chris Creegan (CC)	Non-executive, Social Security Scotland
Manish Joshi (MJ)	Non-executive, Scottish Government

Secretariat

AMG	Governance Manager, Social Security Scotland
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Attendees

TF	DG Chief of Staff
FC	DG Communities Governance and Strategy Lead

1. Welcome

- 1.1. LM welcomed all members and extended a warm welcome to Manish, who was attending the Portfolio Sponsor meeting for the first time. LM and DW provided an overview of the Sponsorship relationship.

Action : AMP and governance team to setup meeting with Manish to provide overview of Social Security Scotland and further explore the context of the Portfolio Sponsor meeting and framework document.

Action : MC noted she has not yet had the opportunity to meet with Manish, and will arrange a future discussion.

- 1.2. Actions from previous meeting were reviewed.

2. Horizon Scanning and Emerging Issues

- 2.1. DW shared details from the Cabinet Secretary meeting held on Tuesday 29 October. The meeting focussed on discussions relating to performance, budget, and stakeholder feedback. In addition, further discussion took place on data sharing opportunities, plans for a digital maturity review and ongoing work on our Future Model activities.
- 2.2. LM highlighted work being progressed by Improvement Service in relation to data sharing, which incorporates pilot activities and legal gateway arrangements. This initiative is backed by UK government organisations, such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Cabinet Office, with pilot testing having been conducted in three separate Scottish regions.
Action : Social Security Scotland to tie in with Improvement Service to assess potential avenues of exploration
- 2.3. MC highlighted the important work which has taken place over the last year in relation to operational efficiencies. This has included improvements to performance culture, improved work queue engagement and better integration between Client Services Delivery and Health and Social Care. MC thanked the Deputy Director in both of these divisions for their continued strong leadership.
- 2.4. Members held further discussion regarding the Adult Disability Payment independent review being published on 5 November.

3. Performance Update

- 3.1. AMP provided an overview of the Balanced Scorecard, highlighting improvements to recent RAG ratings and the stabilisation of redetermination figures. AMP reiterated the discussion which took place with the Cabinet Secretary regarding the managed increase to processing times figures.
- 3.2. MC provided additional context to the information presented within the Balanced Scorecard, acknowledging the successful reallocation of resources to meet diverse priorities without increasing headcount..
- 3.3. MC outlined key priorities for the coming months which include the national rollouts of Carer Support payment in November 2024 and Pension Age Disability payment in April 2025. Additionally, MC highlighted the ongoing monitoring of the 35 hour working week and the impact on telephony and web chat services.
Action : LM discussed the importance of proactive stakeholder engagement, particularly given the anticipated workload and additional clients. LM requested that stakeholder communications are prepared in a timely and proactive manner and focus on preparing stakeholders for future changes.
- 3.4. AMP noted that Annual working days lost continue to be a key focus area, and provided assurance on discussions taking place to support manager capability and prioritise colleague wellbeing.

- 3.5. CC noted that the Executive Advisory Body continues to provide valuable advice and constructive challenge to improve ongoing performance.
- 3.6. LM and DW noted that the People Survey results will soon be available.

4. Risk Update

- 4.1. AMP presented an overview of the strategic risk register and noted four risks which were approaching or exceeding tolerance levels.
- Performance Culture
 - Business Resilience
 - Programme Closure
 - Management Information
- 4.2. LM thanked AMP for the update, and requested assurance that appropriate mitigations were in place. DW referenced the Social Security Scotland 2023/24 Annual Audit Scotland report, scheduled for publication on 12 November, which provides detailed information on risks, recommendations, and agreed mitigation strategies.
- 4.3. Members discussed the potential benefits of introducing a consolidated risk to the DG's Risk Register. This approach would facilitate ongoing discussions on a single, overarching risk, and align with the Permanent Secretary's emphasis on maintaining a strong focus on risk management.
- 4.4. LM advised that it would be beneficial for further work to be undertaken before we proceed with the addition of a consolidated risk. This includes evaluating the potential benefits and drawbacks of selecting a specific risk. LM noted the accountability does not transfer with the risk. But was keen that the DG register reflected the fraud and error risk as it relates to the SG. LM requested further investigation into the arrangements in place with other agencies and their portfolio sponsors.
- 4.5. FC and CC agreed the need to look into this further, in particular the need for clarity around accountability, responsibility for mitigation strategies, and clear articulation of the risk.

Action : AMP, FC and SG to meet with Iain MacNab (Head of Risk Management Policy within DG Corporate) to discuss options, in consultation with Manish and Chris as Non-executives.

In addition, AMP to follow up with Anna Kynaston (Private Secretary to Permanent Secretary) to gather any additional feedback that may inform next steps.

5. Finance Update

- 5.1. SGL presented the September Finance Report agenda item.

- 5.2. An update was provided on budget adjustments, spending controls, and benefit forecasts. In addition, SGL noted the paper includes preliminary considerations in relation to next year's budget.
- 5.3. Further discussion took place on overall resourcing and the impact of resource controls on performance.

6. Public Body RAG Rating

- 6.1. DW provided background information relating to the quarterly Public Body RAG rating report, which is currently noted as 'Green' for Social Security Scotland. DW highlighted that this report provides assurance in relation to a number of areas such as relationships, performance, culture and emerging issues.
- 6.2. LM thanked DW for this information and agreed with the assigned RAG rating. Louise highlighted the importance of the planned rapid functional assessment in providing ongoing assurance relating to this report.
- 6.3. The secretariat informed members that a meeting is scheduled for Friday 1 November with the Public Bodies unit to discuss arrangements for scheduling of this assessment.
- 6.4. Following on from this discussion, members acknowledged we are still in the early stages of current sponsorship arrangements. As we continue to develop, it was agreed there is a need to consider how we can conduct thorough reviews to ensure framework arrangements are adequate.
- 6.5. FC highlighted the need to ensure an adequate audit trail in terms of sponsorship arrangements, in preparation for possible future committee sessions.

Action : FC and Governance team to discuss further and ensure adequate arrangements in place.

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1 Discussion was held on the upcoming Fraud and Error session which LM is attending, scheduled for 14 November. LM noted a preference for attending this in person.
Action : TF to make necessary diary arrangements for LM to attend this in person.
- 7.2 MC provided an update in relation to recent Deputy Director recruitment and future changes to operational model.
- 7.3 SGL provided an overview regarding the current issue affecting supplier payments, and advised mitigations have been put in place until a permanent fix is implemented. LC thanked SGL for the update and acknowledged this issue is impacting all Scottish Government users of Oracle.
- 7.4 LM asked if there was anything further, as Portfolio Accountable Officer, that she should be made aware of. No matters were raised.