

Governance Board Meeting Minutes
5 November 2018 12:45 – 14:00
Governor's House, Boardroom

Attendees

Dame Susan Rice - Chair
Professor Alasdair Smith - Commissioner
Professor Francis Breedon - Commissioner
Professor David Ulph - Commissioner

John Ireland - Chief Executive
Susie Warden – Head of Strategy, Governance and Corporate Services
Claire Murdoch – Head of Devolved Taxes and Social Security
James H White – Head of Operations (minutes)

1. Welcome and Introduction

Dame Susan Rice welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies nor were there any declarations of interest.

2. Statutory Review

Susie Warden highlighted the main points of the paper. Commissioners discussed the appropriate breadth of scope for the review and agreed that:

- **it should focus on the Commission's performance against its remit**
- **the objectives for the review should be based on the Commission's strategic objectives and values, expressed in the Corporate Plan**
- **the Commission's forecasting and its independence should be the priority areas.**

The review should identify where, if any, there were better ways of doing things. This would inform discussions with stakeholders about the future role of the Commission, including whether or not the mandate should be broadened or if further work to clarify the role of the Commission was required.

It was agreed that the Senior Management Team would prepare a short document capturing the points raised during this discussion and at the Governance Board in October for review and agreement by the Commissioners, which would be used to inform discussions with the reviewer and key stakeholders about the review process and its cost.

3. Accommodation Review

John Ireland highlighted the key points of the paper and the options available to the Commission.

In discussion the Commissioners underlined the importance that accommodation has in allowing the Commission to operate independently – this was true of similar UK and Scottish bodies. Commissioners agreed that the cost estimates presented in the paper pointed to remaining in Governor’s House, although there was a clear view that the minimal refurbishment option would not bring the building to a state suitable to the needs and size of the Commission.

The discussion then moved to a more detailed consideration of Governor’s House. There was a consensus that Governor’s House was in a good location with good transport connections and accessibility to stakeholders in the Parliament and Scottish Government and that it compared favourably on cost grounds, with the nearest private sector equivalent in cost terms being located out of town in Ratho (out of town locations had been ruled out by the Governance Board in July 2018). It also benefitted from being a stand-alone, self-contained building though it was noted that work was being taken forward to address concerns about lone working and personal security.

Commissioners were reassured to hear that amongst staff there is a positive view of Governor’s House, both in terms of location and the space provided. Furthermore, when the Scottish Human Rights Commission vacates the building in January 2019, there will be an opportunity to make better use of the space, vacate the unsuitable top floor and improve the meeting and socialisation spaces.

The Commissioners decided that it would be appropriate for the Commission to remain within Governor’s House on the proviso that a suitable refurbishment was undertaken to make it fit for purpose. It was agreed that the minimum refurbishment option in the paper would not be sufficient to meet the needs of the Commission, and that refurbishment should be planned at the start rather than undertaken on a piecemeal basis. It was noted that such refurbishment would require additional funding.

It was agreed that Strategy, Governance and Corporate Services team would:

- consult with staff and Commissioners on the list of items which need to be included in the refurbishment, and use this to inform both the planning of the refurbishment and the consultation with Scottish Government about the required funding;
- start negotiations with Scottish Government about Scottish Fiscal Commission remaining in Governor’s House and what the terms of the agreement ought to be; and
- develop pragmatic plans to make better use of the space once the Commission had sole occupation of Governor’s House.

4. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Governance Board was 24 January 2019.

Scottish Fiscal Commission
5 November 2018