

Minutes

Executive Team

Tuesday 14 January 2025 10.00 – 12.30

Edinburgh MS Teams

Present:

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
John Cornett
Stephen Boyle
Alison Cumming
Helena Gray
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver

In attendance:

Stuart Dennis, Corporate Finance Manager, Corporate Services
Gemma Diamond, Director of Innovation and Transformation, Innovation and Quality
Morag Campsie, Head of Digital Audit, Innovation and Quality
Bobby Alikhani, Project Manager, Innovation and Quality
Owen Smith, Director of Audit Quality and Appointments, Corporate Services
John Gilchrist, Manager Audit Quality and Appointments, Corporate Services
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources, Corporate Services
Sarah Watters, Secretary to the Accounts Commission
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services
Gill Miller, Senior Manager, Innovation and Quality
Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support, Innovation and Quality

1. Minutes of meeting on 17 December 2024

The draft minutes dated 17 December 2024 and the confidential draft minutes of the 17 December 2024 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Note of Executive Team strategic session on 20 January 2025

The Executive Team discussed charging audited bodies a statutory reporting fee and how the fee would be determined. They also considered how to handle potential challenges from audited bodies.

Further discussion focussed on local auditors' requirements for identifying and investigating statutory report issues and the potential impact of statutory reporting fees on decisions. They agreed each report is unique, and annual audit work may not always suffice for statutory reporting. Determining if this is a quality issue and the appropriate action is challenging.

Executive Team agreed:

- AS will charge audited bodies a statutory reporting fee based on set principles, with final decisions made case-by-case by the AGS or CoA.
- Clear communication with audited bodies about fees is essential.
- PABV costs are excluded for now and firms' fees must be pre-agreed with PABV.
- Non-chargeable audit costs and in the circumstances when we decide not to charge an audited body:
 - Will be absorbed into the ASG budget.
 - Firms' fees will be paid from the PABV Legal and Professional Fees budget.
 - ET will monitor statutory reporting costs.
- Guidance not to be issued until the Board has considered the fee proposals.
- PABV colleagues should consult with AQA if they have concerns about local audit work.
- Fees should not influence auditors' statutory reporting decisions.

Gill Miller to take forward a number of actions from this discussion.

3. SCPA report on budget submission

Stuart Dennis joined the meeting

During discussion, the Executive Team thanked the team for the excellent session that took place with the SCPA in December 2024.

Further discussion included the Executive Team noting that we have submitted a response letter to the SCPA outlining our budget approach which covers national insurance, fees, longer term planning and audit modernisation. Although we are awaiting a reply from the SCPA, members agreed that Vicki Bibby will seek an update from the Parliament Clerks. This will allow us to issue our fee letter promptly, followed by our invoices by the end of January.

4. Confidential item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

5. 2023-24 Annual procurement report

Stuart Dennis introduced the 2023-24 Annual procurement report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Approves the submission of the 2023-24 Annual Procurement Report to the Board on 28 January 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team welcomed our first annual procurement report noting that it is an easy and very interesting read.

Further discussion focussed on the publication of the report, with the Executive Team acknowledging that the decision to publish rests with us, as we currently don't fall within the conditions requiring publication. They also considered the recommendation of presenting the report at the Board meeting on 28 January 2025 and agreed that the preferred approach would be to submit it to the Audit Committee on 4 March 2025 and then for noting at the April Board meeting.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed that the report be finalised and circulated by correspondence ahead of submitting it to the Audit Committee on the 4 March 2025.

Action: Stuart will finalise the report and circulate by correspondence.

Stuart Dennis left the meeting.

6. Audit Modernisation Project update

Gemma Diamond, Morag Campsie and Bobby Alikhani joined the meeting.

Gemma Diamond introduced the Audit Modernisation Project update, copies of which had been circulated previously.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the recommendations from the Gate 2 Independent Assurance Review.
- Review and approve the latest version of the Outline Business Case (OBC), ahead of formal submission to the Audit Scotland Board meeting on 28 January 2025, focusing on the updated paragraphs 76-80, 163-165 and 221.

During discussion, the Executive Team thanked the team for a good, detailed report and noted the positive direction of travel.

Further discussion was on our approach to benefits and how we can measure and evidence improvements. Members noted that this evaluation relies on available management information, professional judgement and understanding and recognised that ongoing work is being made to further identify and develop measurable improvements.

The Executive Team considered the level of detail in the paper for presenting to the Board on 28 January 2025 and agreed to keep it concise and focused. Members also agreed that it would be beneficial to offer a catch-up session with the new Board member prior to the upcoming Board meeting.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the recommendations and approved the OBC ahead of formal submission to the Board meeting on 28 January 2025.

Action: Gemma to coordinate a session with the Executive Team focussing on the approach taken and the assumptions used to support the proposed benefits.

Action: Gemma/Vicki to discuss meeting with the new Board member ahead of the Board meeting on 28 January 2025.

Gemma Diamond, Morag Campsie and Bobby Alikhani left the meeting.

7. Draft 2024-25 fee letter

Owen Smith, John Gilchrist, Paul O'Brien and Gill Miller joined the meeting.

Owen Smith introduced the 2024-25 fee letter, copies of which had been circulated previously.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Consider and comment on the draft 24/25 fee letter.
- Consider and comment on the updated 'Our Approach to setting audit fees'.
- Agree next steps for issuing fee letters and guidance.

During discussion, the Executive Team thanked the team for a clear and helpful report.

Further discussion was on when to issue the fee letter, before receiving a response from the SCPA on our budget position. Members agreed that to proceed with sending the letter in January, we include a statement indicating adjustments may be necessary.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed, subject to the changes discussed, that Vicki Bibby will sign-off on the final fee letter.

8. Additional fees quarterly report

Owen Smith introduced the additional fees quarterly report, copies of which had been circulated previously.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the level of additional fees requested and approved for 2022/23 and 2023/24 audits.

During discussion, the Executive Team thanked the team for a helpful and interesting report

Further discussion was on additional fees for non-chargeable central government audits, noting that our budget does not include funding provision for this. Members agreed that any additional fees incurred in this way should be transparently reported and continue to be included in this report.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the report.

Action: Owen and Graeme to look at incorporating the additional fees report into the corporate performance quarterly reporting cycle.

Owen Smith, John Gilchrist, Paul O'Brien and Gill Miller left the meeting.

9. Terms of Reference for Executive Team and Recruitment and Selection Policy

Susan Burgess joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess introduced the Executive Team's Terms of Reference and the Recruitment and Selection policy, copies of which had been circulated previously.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Approve the updated Executive Team terms of Reference (which includes the TOR for the Recruitment Board (Appendix 1).
- Approve the communication plan on the Recruitment Board (Appendix 2).
- Agree the updated Recruitment and Selection Policy (Appendix 3).

During discussion, the Executive Team considered the extension to the appointable window and agreed that for candidates on Bands 1 and 2 this would be 12 months and for candidates on Band 3 and above it would be six months.

Following discussion, the Executive Team approved the reports.

Susan Burgess left the meeting.

10. Draft Board agenda: 28 January 2025

Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Board on 28 January 2025 with the following changes:

- Remove Statutory reporting; schedule as a placeholder for the April Board meeting.
- Remove Annual procurement report; reschedule for the April Board meeting.

11. Draft Accounts Commission agenda: 6 February 2025

Sarah Watters joined the meeting.

Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Accounts Commission on 6 February 2025.

Sarah Watters left the meeting.

12. Draft Executive Team agenda: 27 January 2025

Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 27 January 2025 with the following change:

- Remove CSG scope. This will be re-scheduled to a later date.

13. Any other business

There was no other business.

14. Review of meeting

Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

15. Executive Team Communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication:

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting

16. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 27 January 2025 at 10.00am in Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 27 January 2025 10.00 – 12.30

Edinburgh MS Teams

Present:

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
John Cornett
Kenny Oliver
Stephen Boyle
Alison Cumming
Helena Gray (Joined from item 4)
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

In attendance:

Martin Walker, Director of Corporate Services, Corporate Services
Mark MacPherson, Audit Director, Performance and Best Value
Nicola Bryson, Executive Officer, Corporate Services
Derek Hoy, Senior Manager, Performance and Best Value
Simon Ebbett, Head of Communications, Corporate Services
Robert Cumming, PA Advocacy
Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support, Innovation and Quality
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services

1. Minutes of meeting on 14 January 2025

The draft minutes dated 14 January 2025 and the confidential draft minutes of the 14 January 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, subject to minor amendments.

In terms of correspondence, we are awaiting a response from Owen Smith concerning the queries raised by the Executive Team about the Audit delivery update report.

2. Note of Executive Team strategic session on 20 January 2025

The draft note of the Executive Team strategic session dated 20 January 2025 was considered. The Executive Team agreed that this was an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Parliamentary engagement update and 2024 MSP survey

Mark MacPherson, Nicola Bryson and Derek Hoy joined the meeting.

Parliamentary engagement update

Mark MacPherson introduced the Parliamentary engagement update, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the update on parliamentary engagement.
- Note committee engagement activity and indicate whether there are any committees where ET thinks we might wish to increase our engagement.
- Note recent engagement on Key Lines of Enquiry for the PAC.
- Note plans for engagement over the next six months.
- Consider the MSP survey results (Paper 1B).

The Executive Team thanked the team for the well-prepared report, which demonstrates robust parliamentary engagement and confirms our credible reach across parliament.

During discussion, the Executive Team recognised that parliamentary engagement could extend beyond our formal process and agreed that it would be beneficial to capture this activity as part of the process.

The Executive Team agreed that, in preparation for the next Parliament session and the new PAC in 2026, it would be beneficial to review our current model and to also consider ways to raise awareness of our work among the new intake of MSPs.

Following discussion, the Executive Team were content to note the report.

Action: Simon/Nic to review our current model and explore ways to raise awareness of our work with new MSPs.

Simon Ebbett and Robert Cumming joined the meeting.

2024 MSP survey

Simon Ebbett introduced the 2024 MSP survey, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Consider the results of the survey for any relationship development required.
- Consider whether to conduct the survey this year as we move into the final months of the current Parliament.

The Executive Team thanked the team for a very interesting and informative report with many positive messages.

Further discussion was on how we communicate the findings to the Board and the wider organisation.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the results.

Action: Simon to develop a timeline to communicate the results and share with the Executive Team.

Mark MacPherson, Nicola Bryson, Derek Hoy, Simon Ebbett and Robert Cumming left the meeting.

4. Response to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Proposals on local audit reform

Paul O'Brien joined the meeting.

Paul O'Brien introduced the draft response the MHCLG on local audit reform, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Agree the Audit Scotland response as set out in Appendix 1 to this paper.

The Executive Team thanked Paul for pulling together an excellent response in such a short timescale.

During discussion, the Executive Team agreed that it would be helpful to understand the next steps and the associated timelines, to identify any actions we could take.

Further discussion focused on the proposal to transfer responsibility for the accounting code, with the Executive Team noting that the specifics are yet to be confirmed.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed the Audit Scotland response.

5. Draft Executive Team agenda: 3 February 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 3 February 2025 and requested a verbal update on the future of corporate performance reporting.

6. Executive Team action tracker

The Executive Team requested that a further update is brought to the Executive Team meeting on 3 February 2025.

7. Any other business

There was no other business.

8. Review of meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

9. Executive Team Communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication:

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 3 February 2025 at 10.00am in Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 3 February 2025 10.00 – 12.30

Edinburgh MS Teams

Present:

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
John Cornett
Kenny Oliver
Stephen Boyle
Alison Cumming
Helena Gray (Joined from item 4)
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

No apologies

In attendance:

Martin Walker, Director of Corporate Services, Corporate Services
Graeme Forrester, Head of Performance & Corporate Governance, Corporate Services
Owen Smith, Director of Audit Quality & Appointments, Corporate Services
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services

1. Minutes of meeting on 27 January 2025

The draft minutes dated 27 January 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, subject to minor amendments.

Executive Team noted the following reports for approval: Audit delivery update report and the Scottish Government's consultation: response on Equality & Human Rights Main streaming strategy.

2. Confidential minutes of Extraordinary Recruitment Board meeting on 27 January 2025

The draft minutes dated 27 January 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Review of risk management framework

Graeme Forrester joined the meeting.

Graeme Forrester introduced the Review of the risk management framework, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the review of the RMF.

- Advise of any suggested revisions to the proposed RMF.

During discussion, the Executive Team agreed that more detail be added to the report to strengthen content. Members also agreed that the Accounts Commission risk register should be reflected, given its strong interdependencies with the Audit Scotland risk register.

Further discussion focused on whether we had used the Treasury Orange Book as a guide for considering our risks and if our risk register captures all necessary elements. Additionally, the Executive Team evaluated the risk scores and their methodology, seeking clarification on the process used. Members also agreed that we should think about aiming for a range of risk scores rather than an absolute value.

The discussion highlighted that the risk universe appears to be more internally focused. The Executive Team agreed that various external factors also influence our organisation and that it would be beneficial to map these into the risk universe

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed that we would recommend that the Audit Committee approve the RMF and note the activities that are currently taking place.

Action: Graeme will review the risk management framework, ensuring Treasury Orange Book principles are captured, evaluating scoring methodology, assessing risk appetite, and reviewing implementation dates.

Action: Graeme will identify options for an external independent review of our risk maturity.

Action: Graeme will undertake a review of other similar bodies risk registers.

4. Review of risk register

Graeme introduced the Review of the risk register, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Consider the updated risk register.
- Determine whether additional management action is required.
- Consider reduce the risk score for risk A3 – failure of delivery – to 12.
- Agree presentation of the risk register to the Audit Committee on 4th March 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team agreed to reflect the Future Public Audit Model in the report due to its strong interdependencies with other projects. However, it will not be listed as a risk until the PID is in place, which will be presented to the Strategic Improvement Programme Board in March 2025.

Further discussion focused on individual risks and their evolution, highlighting the need to update the risk register accordingly. The Executive Team questioned why some risks continuously roll forward and considered whether a different approach is needed to address this. In addition, the Executive Team discussed their governance role in managing risks, agreeing that the risk register is effective only if it drives actions and identifies necessary interventions.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed the report is submitted to the Audit Committee on 4 March 2025, subject to the amendments discussed.

5. 2025-26 Schedule of deep dives

Graeme introduced the Schedule of deep dives for 2025-26, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the criteria used in developing the draft schedule.
- Discuss the proposed deep dive schedule for 2025/26 at paragraph 18.

During discussion, the Executive Team noted that additional topic areas are being considered prior to submitting the schedule to the Audit Committee on 4 March 2025. In addition, these topic areas will address not only identified risks but also business areas that are under development or scrutiny.

Further discussion highlighted the Audit Scotland Board's interest in having more in-depth strategic discussions on topics such as the Audit Modernisation Project outside of regular Board meetings. These sessions will differ from the deep dive sessions.

Following discussion, the Executive Team acknowledged the proposed deep dive schedule and agreed to consider additional topic areas before the Audit Committee meeting on 4 March 2025

Action: Graeme will share his topic ideas with the Executive Team and invite them to contribute their own suggestions.

Action: Graeme and Vicki will clarify the distinctions between a strategic session and a deep dive session and consider what these differences mean for upcoming plans.

6. Risk deep dive: failure of market capacity / appetite for public audit work from the private sector (future appointments)

Owen Smith joined the meeting.

Graeme introduced the Risk deep dive, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Discuss the risk deep dive.
- Agree that, subject to any amendments, it be presented to a deep dive session of the Audit Committee 4 March 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team agreed that the Future Public Audit Model has strong interdependencies with this deep dive and that this should be emphasised more in the session. In addition, the Executive Team agreed that the framing should be in the context of addressing both the private sector risks on public audit profitability and also Audit Scotland's risks of not considering bids value for money and what controls we have in place in ensuring delivery and quality.

Further discussion focussed on the format of the session with the Executive Team agreeing that the slides are presented as background material to inform the discussion.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed, subject to the amendments discussed, it be presented to a deep dive session of the Audit Committee on 4 March 2025.

Owen Smith left the meeting.

7. 2024-25 Data incident/loss report: Quarter 3

Graeme introduced the 2024-25 Data incident/loss report for quarter 3, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note this report.
- Note that it will be considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 04 March 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team noted the imminent rollout of the new ID cards and lanyards. They emphasised the importance of communicating to staff the reasons behind this new look. The Executive Team noted that while colleague photographs on our internal systems are not mandatory, it should be strongly encouraged.

Further discussion focussed on the recent indirect cyber incident, with the Executive Team agreeing that the communication to update staff was effective. Additionally, a lessons learned session will be held with all those involved.

Following discussion, the Executive Team were content to note the report and that it be considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 4 March 2025.

8. 2024-25 Internal/external audit cooperation

Graeme introduced the 2024-25 Internal/external audit cooperation, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was content to note the report.

9. Internal audit recommendations progress report

Graeme introduced the Internal audit recommendations progress report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the progress on the implementation of outstanding audit recommendations.
- Agree that the report, subject to any required amendments, be submitted to the Audit Committee meeting of 04 March 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team discussed progress and timescales on the implementation of outstanding audit recommendations.

Further discussion centered on budget training, with the Executive Team requesting confirmation that all budget holders feel equipped to manage their budgets and are comfortable with their responsibilities. Additionally, members requested that this recommendation remain open until we have a clearer understanding of the current situation.

The Executive Team noted that the business continuity plan is scheduled for approval at the Executive Team meeting on 17 February 2025. They were assured that, despite some members sending their apologies, there will be enough attendees to meet the quorum.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed that the report, subject to the amendments discussed, be submitted to the Audit Committee meeting of 04 March 2025.

Action: Graeme will undertake further work to determine if an assessment has been conducted on the training provision for budget management to determine if budget holders feel confident in discharging those duties.

Action: Kenny will confirm with Vicki and Graeme that the audit recommendation regarding the LMS dashboard, which is scheduled for completion by the end of March 2025, will be met.

10. Corporate performance reporting: verbal update

Graeme provided an update on refining corporate performance reporting, emphasising the need for efficient, timely, and real-time data. He proposed a dashboard that allows users to drill down to important information, with built-in flexibility to adapt to future changes.

Graeme has been engaging with colleagues from the Audit Services Group, the Resource & Management Information team, and the Audit Modernisation Project team. He is also collaborating with the NAO and meeting with the Board Chair to understand the Board's expectations on performance reporting.

During the discussion, the Executive Team emphasised the importance of aligning performance reporting with corporate priorities and key risks. They expressed a desire to shift from detailed information to a more focused set of key indicators and to determine what needs to be measured and why. Additionally, members supported a hierarchical approach to stratify information based on the needs of different groups.

The Executive Team discussed next steps and timelines, agreeing to manage this as a project to ensure timely delivery. The team also recognised their pivotal role in performance reporting and stressed the importance of their involvement in determining what is reported to the Board and the Audit Committee.

The Executive Team were content with the update and noted that a paper would be submitted to a future Executive Team meeting.

Action: Graeme will develop a project plan to send by correspondence to the Executive Team.

Action: Graeme will schedule the next update report for an upcoming Executive Team meeting.

11. Draft Executive Team agenda: 17 February 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 17 February 2025.

12. Executive Team action tracker

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the action tracker.

13. Any other business

There was no other business.

14. Review of meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

15. Executive Team Communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication:

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting

16. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 17 February 2025 at 10.00am in Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 17 February 2025 10.00 – 12.30

Edinburgh MS Teams

Present:

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
John Cornett
Alison Cumming
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver
Helena Grey
Stephen Boyle

In attendance:

Martin Walker, Director of Corporate Services, Corporate Services
Graeme Forrester, Head of Performance & Corporate Governance, Corporate Services
Ian Metcalfe, Corporate Performance Officer, Corporate Services
Stuart Dennis, Finance Manager, Corporate Services
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources, Corporate Services
David Loudon, Human Resources Assistant Manager, Corporate Services
Michael Oliphant, Audit Director, Audit Services
Gemma Diamond, Director of Innovation and Transformation, Innovation and Quality
Michelle Borland, Director of Innovation and Transformation, Innovation and Quality
Jillian Matthew, Senior Manager, Performance Audit and Best Value
David Robertson, Digital Services Manager, Corporate Services
Nicola Paton, Digital Project Manager, Corporate Services
Owen Smith, Director of Audit Quality & Appointments, Corporate Services
Sarah Watters, Secretary to the Accounts Commission
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services

1. Minutes of meeting on 3 February 2025

The draft minutes dated 3 February 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Quarter 3 Performance reporting

Graeme Forrester, Ian Metcalfe, Stuart Dennis, Susan Burgess, Michael Oliphant, David Loudon and Gemma Diamond joined the meeting the meeting.

Q3 Corporate performance report

Graeme Forrester introduced the Q3 Corporate performance report, copies of which had been circulated previously.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Review the performance in Q3 as set out below and in appendix 1.
- Consider the issues affecting performance, the actions identified and whether any additional management action is required.

During discussion, the Executive Team focussed on the report's narrative highlighting the need for additional clarity and context in certain areas.

Further discussion addressed the area of recording audit and non-audit time. The Executive Team acknowledged that work is ongoing to resolve this issue. They also noted that there are inaccuracies in the time recording system, which can sometimes reflect an inaccurate balance. This issue is currently under investigating.

The Executive Team also discussed the performance on mandatory training and agreed on the importance of consistently reminding colleagues to complete the training.

Further discussion also addressed the delay in the strategic workforce plan caused by resource constraints. The Executive Team was reassured that the plan will be completed in time for the Board meeting on 1 April 2025.

The Executive Team highlighted the importance of consolidating all quarterly performance reports into one and producing a timeline to highlight and track key areas of activity.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the report, subject to the changes discussed.

Q3 Financial performance report

Stuart Dennis introduced the Q3 Financial performance report, copies of which had been circulated previously.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the financial results for the nine months to 31 December 2024.

During discussion, the Executive Team noted that the holiday pay accrual is higher than budgeted and that this can potentially impact the overall budget, requiring careful management to prevent an overspend. Additionally, the Executive Team discussed the implications of this variance for future budgeting.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the report.

Q3 People report

Susan Burgess introduced the Q3 People report, copies of which had been circulated previously.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the exit interview feedback from colleagues attached at appendix one.
- Note the report and workforce infographic attached at appendix two.
- Consider and discuss the key findings in relation to Q3's workforce data and ensure any key messages and actions are shared within business group management teams.

During discussion, the Executive Team discussed absence management and noted that we are working with other audit agencies to share best practice on absence data and wellbeing.

Further discussion was on the annual leave carry forward with the Executive Team agreeing that it would be beneficial for all business groups to review and 'clean up' their time recording data. This will ensure we are well-prepared to start using the new time recording system from day one. Members agreed that this should also be discussed at the Performance, Finance and Risk Management Group.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the report, subject to minor amendments.

Action: Martin to provide re-assurance that TRS data in upcoming papers due will be correct.

Graeme Forrester, Ian Metcalfe, Stuart Dennis, Susan Burgess, Michael Oliphant, David Loudon and Gemma Diamond left the meeting.

3. Confidential item

This item is subject to a separate confidential minute.

4. 2025 Annual review of business continuity arrangements

Graeme Forrester and Ian Metcalfe joined the meeting.

Graeme introduced the 2025 Annual review of business continuity arrangements, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the annual review of our Business Continuity arrangements.
- Approve the Policy and Objectives attached as an appendix to this report.
- Note that the detailed incident recovery plans have been updated.
- Note that further minor revisions to the plans may take place during the year as appropriate (to reflect updates to team composition, amendments to contact details, or changes to business practice).
- Agree that, subject to any required amendments, the Business Continuity Policy and Objectives be submitted to the Audit Committee for approval at its meeting on 4 March 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team acknowledged that certain aspects of the Cyber Incident Response Plan remain incomplete. It was agreed that additional context should be incorporated into the annual review of business continuity arrangements report before submitting it to the Audit Committee on 4 March 2025, to provide a comprehensive overview of our business continuity arrangements and ensure consistency across all documents.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed that, subject to the amendments discussed, the report is submitted to the Audit Committee for approval on 4 March 2025.

Graeme Forrester and Ian Metcalfe left the meeting.

5. Digital security update

David Robertson and Nicola Paton joined the meeting.

Nicola Paton introduced the update on Digital security, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the digital security risk profile.
- Note the ongoing and planned actions to mitigate digital risks.
- Note the summaries of Threats and risks, and Actions and Improvements that are provided in this document.

During discussion, the Executive Team acknowledged the successful recruitment efforts, with the Digital Services Team now at 80% capacity. However, this shortfall still poses a risk to project delivery. The Digital Services Team is actively exploring various solutions to address this issue. Additionally, the Executive Team emphasised the need to better understand the potential risks this shortfall may pose to other projects across the organisation.

Further discussion focused on the unsuccessful system recovery exercise from January 2025. The Executive Team was reassured that a priority project is currently underway to address these issues, with a repeat exercise planned. The Executive Team requested that this context be included in the report to be submitted to the Audit Committee on 4 March 2025.

The Executive Team noted that we need to discourage colleagues from using personal and external email accounts, as these pose a significant threat to Audit Scotland's security.

Following discussion, the Executive Team were content to note the report, subject to minor amendments.

Action: David, Nicola, and Martin will examine the connections across all reports where digital elements are prominent to identify potential risks.

Action: Vicki will discuss the issues related to using personal email addresses with the relevant colleagues.

David Robertson and Nicola Paton left the meeting.

6. Final DEI strategy and 2025 mainstreaming report sign off

Gemma Diamond, Michelle Borland and Jillian Matthew joined the meeting.

Gemma Diamond introduced the final DEI strategy and 2025 mainstreaming report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the update on DEI strategy development.
- Review and provide feedback on the draft DEI strategy and draft delivery plan.
- Review and provide feedback on the draft mainstreaming equality progress report.

During discussion, the Executive Team agreed that while the Board does not need to see the detailed delivery plan, it is essential to provide members with high-level summaries to provide assurance of progress.

Further discussion was on the importance of maintaining our ambitions for diversity and inclusion despite some external pressures. In addition, the Executive Team noted the integration of the DEI Strategy with other policies e.g. hybrid working, ensuring they are complimentary and meeting business needs.

Following discussion, the Executive Team were content to note the report.

Gemma Diamond, Michelle Borland and Jillian Matthew left the meeting.

7. Confidential item

This item is subject to a separate confidential minute.

8. Draft RemCo agenda: 4 March 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the RemCo on 4 March 2025.

Susan Burgess left the meeting.

9. Draft Audit Committee agenda: 4 March 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Audit Committee on 4 March 2025.

10. Draft Accounts Commission agenda: 13 March 2025

Sarah Watters joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Accounts Commission on 13 March 2025.

Sarah Watters left the meeting.

11. Draft Executive Team agenda: 3 March 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 3 March 2025.

12. Any other business

There was no other business.

13. Review of meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

14. Executive Team Communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication:

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting

15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 3 March 2025 at 10.00am in Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 17 February 2025 10.00 – 12.30

Edinburgh MS Teams

Present:

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
John Cornett
Alison Cumming
Kenny Oliver
Stephen Boyle
Nicola Bryson (Minutes)

Apologies:

Helena Gray

In attendance:

Martin Walker, Director of Corporate Services, Corporate Services
Simon Ebbett, Head of Communications, Corporate Services
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources, Corporate Services
Stuart Dennis, Finance Manager, Corporate Services
Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support, Innovations and Quality
John Boyd, Audit Director, Audit Services
Sarah Watters, Secretary to the Accounts Commission
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services

1. Minutes of meeting on 17 February 2025 and confidential minutes of meeting on 17 February 2025

The draft minutes dated 17 February 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, subject to minor amendment and all correspondence items noted for approval.

Action: Martin to provide re-assurance that TRS data in upcoming papers due will be correct.

2. 2024-25 Annual report and accounts

Simon Ebbett joined the meeting the meeting.

Simon Ebbett introduced the 2024-25 Annual Report and accounts, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Provide feedback on the proposed themes in 'Narrative themes' in 10 – 17.
- Note the updated key dates in 'Key dates' at paras 18 – 19.

During discussion, Simon acknowledged the examples of ASG where financial audit has added value to public audit and links to our corporate initiatives and QPAS that can be included in the Annual Report.

Further discussion from Executive Team noted that the AMP section straplines need to be updated, that PSR narrative has moved on and emphasis the ambition and progress of the Scottish Government, included Best Value examples and ensure there is a balance between firms and ASG in relation to quality content in the Annual Report.

Following discussion, Executive Team agreed to the themes and structures detailed in the paper for the Annual Report and look forward to seeing a draft in the near future.

Simon Ebbett left the meeting.

3. Confidential item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

4. Reflections on the shorter working week – verbal update

Susan Burgess gave an update on changes to contract and working patterns in light of the new Shorter Working Week starting in April.

Following discussion, Executive Team noted the update and thanked Susan and her team for all the work preparing the updated T&Cs.

5. Confidential item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

6. Response to consultation on local authority general power of competence

Paul O'Brien, John Boyd and Sarah Watters joined the meeting.

Paul O'Brien introduced the response to a consultation on local authority general power of competence, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the background explanation on a general power of competence.
- Note the areas on which the Scottish Government are seeking views.
- Discuss and agree Audit Scotland's overall stance on a general power of competence, and our approach to participating in the consultation and related discussions.

During discussion, Executive Team acknowledged it is not for Audit Scotland to get into the power of competence, that we can add value in any controls considered if the competence is developed and finally linking to PABV we would need to review any evidence from the consultation to consider our stance on it for our audit work

Following discussion, Executive Team agreed Audit Scotland's stance on a general power of competence, our approach to participating in the consultation, for the team to decide on roundtable attendance and to submitting a response.

Paul O'Brien, John Boyd and Sarah Watters left the meeting.

7. Draft Executive Team agenda: 17 March 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 17 March 2025.

8. Executive Team action tracker

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the action tracker, with further updates required to actions marked as complete.

Action: Vicki and Nic to update action tracker.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

10. Review of meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

11. Executive Team Communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication:

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 17 March 2025 at 10.00am in Glasgow.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 17 March 2025 10.00 – 12.30

Glasgow MS Teams

Present:

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
John Cornett
Alison Cumming
Kenny Oliver
Helena Gray
Stephen Boyle
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

No apologies

In attendance:

Martin Walker, Director of Corporate Services, Corporate Services
Gemma Diamond, Director of Innovation and Transformation, Innovation and Quality
Michelle Borland, Head of Organisational Improvement
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources, Corporate Services
Stuart Dennis, Finance Manager, Corporate Services
Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support, Innovations and Quality
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services

1. Minutes of meeting on 3 March 2025 and confidential minutes of meeting on 3 March 2025

The draft minutes dated 3 March 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, subject to minor amendment and all correspondence items noted for approval.

2. Confidential Item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

3. Operational planning 2025-2028: Draft business plan and strategic workforce plan

Gemma Diamond, Michelle Borland, Stuart Dennis and Susan Burgess joined the meeting.

Gemma Diamond introduced the draft business and strategic workforce plans, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Feedback on the draft business plan, included as Appendix one, noting the further developments required in paragraph 10.
- Agree to taking a consistent, organisation wide approach to monitoring progress against the business plan, through MS Planner, and reporting progress through our corporate performance reporting.
- Agree to proposals in paragraph 7 setting out the level of detail we plan to share with the Audit Scotland Board to provide assurance on the business plan.
- Feedback on the proposed approach to medium term planning outlined in paragraphs 17 to 21.
- Feedback on the draft strategic workforce plan, included as Appendix two and agree to sharing this with the Audit Scotland Board for assurance.

Operational Planning

During discussion, the Executive Team reflected on their potential involvement in the scenario planning approach and considered the most effective ways to engage in these discussions. They also discussed how scenarios are agreed and prioritised throughout the year noting that the Operational Planning Group initially considers this with the aim of presenting the information to Executive Team for further discussion. More consideration will be given to how this approach will be implemented in practice.

Further discussion was on the measuring and reporting on performance within the operational plan with the Executive Team recognising additional work will be needed in this area on completion of the performance management framework review. This should ensure clearer alignment with corporate strategy. Additionally, members agreed that the timescales for delivery objectives should be reassessed to provide greater clarity. They also emphasised the need for a consistent and focused approach across all objectives to ensure that the right activities are in place with the appropriate resources.

Workforce Planning

During discussion, the Executive Team recognised the challenges associated with workforce planning and noted that there is ongoing engagement with other organisations to learn about their approaches to workforce planning. Members agreed that it would also be beneficial for the Workforce Planning Team to collaborate with the PABV Team, which is leading the current best value thematic area on workforce innovation, to gain further insight.

The Executive Team agreed that the current workforce plan provides a solid and stable baseline and are committed to being involved in scenario planning to shape its ongoing development.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the progress made and agreed that a high-level report on our business planning approach is submitted to Board on 1 April 2025, and a more detailed workforce planning report is submitted to RemCo on 6 May 2025.

Gemma Diamond, Michelle Borland, Stuart Dennis and Susan Burgess left the meeting

4. Statutory reporting fees

Gill Miller and Paul O'Brien joined the meeting.

Paul O'Brien introduced the statutory reporting fees, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Comment on the attached paper for the Board.
- Agree, subject to any required amendments, that it be submitted to the Board for its meeting on 1 April 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team agreed to maintain a principles-based approach for the report, avoiding any new elements that could affect the fees and funding strategy. This report represents a shift in practice, not a change in policy.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed, subject to the required amendments, that the report be submitted to the Board meeting on 1 April 2025.

Gill Miller and Paul O'Brien left the meeting

5. Development of the Performance Management Framework

Graeme Forester joined the meeting.

Graeme Forrester provided a brief overview on the development of the Performance Management Framework, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the content of this report.
- Consider the proposed structure of key KPIs and the background sub-KPIs.
- Consider the proposed structure of reporting to Executive Team and Board / Committee.
- Note the corporate performance reporting framework attached as an appendix.

During discussion, the Executive Team reviewed the three-phased approach, focusing particularly on phase 1. They noted that by the first quarter's reporting, we might see a different format with the intension being to run with a dual-track approach for assurance.

Further discussion focused on how we can utilise reporting to drive performance improvements and capture insights that enable us to take timely and effective actions.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the progress made.

Graeme Forrester left the meeting.

6. Draft Accounts Commission agenda: 10 April 2025

Joe Chapman joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Accounts Commission on 10 April 2025.

Joe Chapman left the meeting.

7. Draft Board agenda: 1 April 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Board on 1 April 2025, including the removal of the agenda item on the Risk Management Framework.

Action: Martin/Niki will incorporate an indicator within the Board agenda to highlight which reports have been reviewed by the Audit Committee.

8. Draft Executive Team agenda: 24 March 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 24 March 2025.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

10. Review of meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

11. Executive Team Communications

Vicki Bibby to liaise with Kirsty Gibbins on the key highlights for internal communication:

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 24 March 2025 at 10.00am in Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 24 March 2025 10.00 – 12.00

Edinburgh MS Teams

Present:

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
John Cornett
Alison Cumming
Helena Gray
Stephen Boyle
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver

In attendance:

Martin Walker, Director of Corporate Services, Corporate Services
Gemma Diamond, Director of Innovation and Transformation, Innovation and Quality
Michelle Borland, Head of Organisational Improvement
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources, Corporate Services
Graeme Forrester, Head of Performance and Corporate Governance
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services

1. Minutes of meeting on 17 March 2025 and confidential minutes of meeting on 17 March 2025

The draft minutes dated 17 March 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, and all correspondence items noted for approval.

2. SIP minutes of meeting on 10 March 2025

The draft minutes dated 10 March 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Confidential Item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

4. Confidential Item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

5. Internal Audit report: Follow up report

Graeme Forrester joined the meeting.

Graeme Forrester introduced Internal Audit Follow up report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

During discussion, the Executive Team acknowledged that our internal auditors are satisfied with the progress on the budget holder training recommendation. However, the Executive Team emphasised the importance of conducting a review to ensure our budget holders are confident in their budget management skills and to identify any areas where additional support may be required.

Action: Graeme will provide the Executive Team with a timeline for assessing the competency of budget holders and identifying those who may need additional support.

Action: Graeme will provide Wbg the opportunity to reword the narrative on budget holder training and will brief the Chair of the Audit Committee on our position in relation to this before the Audit Committee on 6 May 2025.

Graeme Forrester left the meeting.

6. Draft Executive Team agenda: 31 March 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 31 March 2025.

7. Any other business

Optimising the format and structure of the Executive Team meetings

The Executive Team reflected on the format and timings of the meetings and agreed that including the timings for individual items in the formal agenda would be beneficial. They also acknowledged the importance of carefully considering the agenda to ensure the timings accurately reflect the anticipated discussions.

8. Review of meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

9. Executive Team Communications

Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication.

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 31 March 2025 at 10.00am in Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 31 March 2025 10.00 – 12.30

Edinburgh MS Teams

Present:

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
John Cornett
Alison Cumming
Stephen Boyle
Miranda Nicoll (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver
Helena Gray

In attendance:

Martin Walker, Director of Corporate Services, Corporate Services
Carole Grant, Audit Director, Audit Services
Blyth Deans, Audit Director, Performance Audit and Best Value
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources, Corporate Services
Nichola Williams, Senior Data Analyst, Innovations and Quality
Stuart Dennis, Corporate Finance Manager, Corporate Services
Wojciech Kuzma, Finance Business Partner, Corporate Services
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services

1. Minutes of meeting on 24 March 2025 and confidential minutes of meeting on 24 March 2025

The draft minutes dated 24 March 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, and all correspondence items noted for approval.

The Executive Team noted the positive result in Audit Scotland achieving One Star status.

The Executive Team noted the Board committee meeting location paper (circulated via correspondence) for discussion at the Audit Scotland Board meeting (1 April 2025) will consider a visit to Inverness to be arranged out with a full Board meeting.

The Executive Team noted a paper to the Audit Scotland Board meeting (1 April 2025) as an outstanding action on the cost of delayed audits – timings didn't allow submission to ET in advance.

2. Recruitment Board minutes of meeting on 24 March 2025

The draft minutes dated 24 March 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, subject to agreed amendments.

Action: Miranda / Niki to update the draft minutes with amendments as agreed.

3. Audit intelligence

Carole Grant and Blyth Deans joined the meeting.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the current audit intelligence arrangements that are in place and how these vary across the different sectors.
- Agree that:
 - Sector leads ‘own’ relevant audit intelligence processes and must ensure that the AGS and CoA are sighted on audit issues that should be considered for statutory reporting, this includes engagement with the firms as required.
 - Statutory reporting moderation process is refreshed to provide clarity on timelines and ensure audit intelligence is consistently captured and shared including any decisions that may result in reporting in future years.
 - Hotlist process is retired and is instead embedded in the refreshed statutory reporting moderation and strategic risks and issues processes.
 - Current issues process is retired after this year, due to inclusion in planning guidance, and is instead embedded in the refreshed statutory reporting moderation process.
 - Strategic risks and issues moves from a 6 monthly review and publication to an annual review and publication given strategic nature of process.

Carole provided a brief introduction, noting the CoA’s apologies for this meeting and that Carole and Blyth would engage separately with the CoA in relation to statutory reporting and local government processes.

During discussions, the Executive Team noted proposals for Sector leads to ‘own’ relevant audit intelligence noting the local government process in place with potential to replicate this with AGS and the other Sector leads. However, there is a need to avoid a silo’d approach within different sectors, noting the potential to discuss sectoral issues at ASGMT/PABVLT joint sessions to ensure oversight across all sectors.

During discussions, the Executive Team noted proposals to retire the hotlist process however, concerns on oversight from the Executive Team on potential themes across the public sector and ‘near misses’ were raised. It was agreed to present either 6 monthly or annually to an ET strategic session to ensure Executive Team continue to have oversight of any key issues and risks.

During discussions, the Executive Team noted the statutory reporting timelines, highlighting NHS timings as constrained. Carole agreed to explore the timing for consistency for different sectors and meetings and consider potential joint meetings depending on timings.

During discussions, the Executive Team noted proposals to reduce the strategic risks and issues from a 6 monthly to an annual review, highlighting links to the work programme and statutory reporting process which all help develop future performance audit work.

Following discussion, ET agreed in principle the proposals for audit intelligence arrangements, subject to CoA discussions with the output from CoA discussions to be circulated to Executive Team, before formal agreement is made.

In relation to the communication and messaging, the Executive Team agreed to emphasise enhanced engagement across the organisation to sharing intelligence and the expectation on the new approach to audit intelligence arrangements, to include Senior Managers alongside Audit Directors.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed the proposal to review the new process towards the end of the 2024/25 audit cycle.

Action: Carole and Blyth engage with the Controller of Audit on the proposed audit intelligence arrangements and feedback to Executive Team for a final decision.

Action: Carole to revisit timings of the statutory reporting moderation process for different sectors.

Action: Carole and Blyth to schedule time at ET strategic sessions in the absence of the hotlist and current issues processes.

Action: Carole and Blyth to schedule time for a review of the new approach towards the end of the 2024/25 audit cycle.

Carole Grant and Blyth Deans left the meeting.

4. Employee passport scheme and equality impact assessment

Susan Burgess and Nichola Williams joined the meeting.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the draft employee passport documentation (appendix one), reasonable adjustment guidance (appendix two).
- Note the consultation undertaken by the working group and the equality impact assessment (appendix three) to introduce the scheme at Audit Scotland.
- Approve the equality impact assessment and proposed communications (appendix four) so that we can formally launch the scheme.

In addition to the above, Susan confirmed for governance purposes that the Executive Team was asked to approve the employee passport scheme.

During discussion, the Executive Team noted the reasons behind the employee passport scheme and the positive feedback on completing the passport by Nichola Williams.

The Executive Team noted that the scheme was voluntary for all staff but compulsory for line managers of those taking part and highlighted training for line managers was important to ensure the scheme is successful. Susan will liaise with the L&D Manager on training requirements for all line managers and ensure it is included in all future staff inductions.

During discussions, it was noted that to ensure consistency with line managers and their approach to reasonable adjustment requests, the People Leads for business groups would be the conduit for consistency of approach.

In relation to the proposed communication, the Executive Team were keen to ensure an emphasis on the scheme supporting staff wellbeing to deliver Audit Scotland's organisational objectives to deliver the needs of the business and ensuring managers know this doesn't supersede other policies already in place.

Following discussion, the Executive Team approved the launch of the employee passport scheme, subject to training for line managers, approval for the EQIA and communications to include the balance between employee wellbeing against delivering business needs.

Action: Susan to ensure the employee passport scheme is included in all staff inductions and work with the L&D Manager on training requirements for line managers.

Nichola Williams left the meeting.

5. Annual review of the Terms of Reference – RemCo

Vicki Bibby introduced the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) Terms of Reference (ToR), copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- To consider and approve the changes proposed in the draft ToR at appendix one.

Following discussion, ET approved the minor amendments to the Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) Terms of Reference (ToR).

6. Confidential Item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

7. Draft Executive Team agenda: 14 April 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 14 April 2025.

Action: Martin will liaise with ET support on the additional agenda item for this meeting or the next meeting.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

Thanks were given to MW for his contributions to ET and wider Audit Scotland, noting this is his last ET meeting.

9. Review of meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

10. Executive Team Communications

Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication.

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 14 April 2025 at 09.00 in Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 14 April 2025 09.00am

Audit Scotland offices, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
John Cornett
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver
Stephen Boyle
Alison Cumming

In attendance:

Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources
Sharon Kewley, Business Support Manager
Graeme Forrester, Head of Performance and Corporate Governance
Simon Ebbett, Head of Communications

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 31 March 2025 and confidential minutes of Executive Team meeting on 31 March 2025

The draft minutes dated 31 March 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, and all correspondence items noted for approval with the exception of the Strategic Workforce Strategy which will be noted for approval at the next Executive Team meeting.

2. 2024/25 Annual report: Health, safety and wellbeing

Susan Burgess and Sharon Kewley joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess introduced the annual health, safety and wellbeing report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the report, progress and activity related to health, safety and wellbeing across the organisation over the course of 2024/25.

- Approve the report, subject to any required amendments, for onward sharing with the RemCo in May 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team focused on the rising trend in sickness absence and discussed potential actions and interventions to address this issue. Members agreed that the report should emphasise the Executive Team's concern regarding this increase

Further discussion focused on the reasons for absence, with the Executive Team noting that additional categorisation within the HR system could enhance our ability to identify and understand the underlying causes.

The Executive Team noted that the ongoing manager training is fostering a cultural shift, with managers becoming more proactive in addressing sickness absence. The Executive Team agreed that it would be beneficial to communicate with the wider organisation, reminding colleagues of the sickness absence policy and the procedures to follow if they are off sick.

Following discussion, the Executive Team approved the report, subject to the required amendments, for onward sharing with the RemCo in May 2025.

Susan Burgess and Sharon Kewley left the meeting.

Action: Susan/Sharon to send a communication to the wider organisation reminding everyone about the sickness absence policy and procedures.

3. 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan

Graeme Forrester joined the meeting.

Graeme Forrester provided an update on the development of the 2025/26 internal audit plan, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Consider the current proposed topics for inclusion in the 2025/26 internal audit plan.
- Consider additional topics for consideration for inclusion in the plan.

During discussion, the Executive Team reviewed the proposed topics for inclusion in the internal audit plan and agreed to include contract management, cashflow management, and budgeting and financial management as potential areas. Members agreed that it would also be beneficial to outline the scope for each of these topics.

Action: Graeme to circulate to ET members a note of the suggested Internal Audit topics discussed, and provide a note of the scope of the previous Contract Management IA.

4. Internal Audit: Progress report

Graeme Forrester introduced the internal audit progress report, copies of which has been previously circulated.

Following discussion, the Executive Team was content to note the summary of audit work undertaken in 2024/25.

5. Review of risk register

Graeme Forrester introduced the updated risk register, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Consider the risk register.
- Determine whether additional management action is required.
- Agree that the updated risk register, subject to any required amendments, be submitted for the Audit Committee meeting on 6 May 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team reviewed risk M5, 'Failure of audited bodies to provide accounts and supporting files to the required standard', and debated whether it should be categorised as green, given the challenges in this area. They noted that additional work is needed to make this assessment. Members also agreed that there is a strong connection between this risk (M5) and A3, 'Failure of delivery,' and that further discussion in this area would be useful.

Further discussion focused on risk A14, 'Failure to deliver in accordance with the 2025-26 financial and operational plans,' with the Executive Team considering whether to reassess its scoring due to the potential for an upward trend.

The Executive Team requested that, in terms of sequencing, this report should be reviewed by the Performance, Finance, and Risk Management Group before being presented to the Executive Team.

Action: Graeme to add to the Risk Register report for presentation to the Audit Committee a section to inform Audit Committee that Executive Team are looking into potential risks relating to audited bodies not providing required information on time or to the standard required, referencing risks A3 and M5.

Action: Graeme to ensure that the Risk Register is provided to PFRMG before submission to Executive Team.

Action: Niki is to ensure that the agenda includes a note specifying where reports have been reviewed prior to being presented at the Executive Team meetings.

6. 2024/25 Annual assurance reports

Graeme Forrester provided a brief introduction on the first tranche of the 2024/25 annual assurance reports, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the suite of reports set out in the tables below.
- Subject to any amendments, approve the submission of the reports as set out in the table at paragraph 6 below.
- Note the circulation of other annual assurance reports for ET consideration via correspondence/ at ET meetings as set out in the table at paragraph 7 below.

Annual review of performance management arrangements

Graeme Forrester introduced the annual review of performance management arrangements, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the performance management arrangements in place.
- Note the ongoing and planned performance management developments in 2025/26.
- Agree, subject to any amendment, this report be submitted to the Audit Committee meeting on 6 May 2025.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the report and agreed this report be submitted to the Audit Committee meeting on 6 May 2025.

Annual report on data protection and data incidents / loss

Graeme Forrester introduced the annual report on data protection and data incidents / loss, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the report.
- Agree, subject to any amendments, that this report be submitted to the Audit Committee on 6 May 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team observed that the 'new' Outlook, which will become the default application on Windows 10 and 11, indicates that the auto-complete function cannot be disabled. This means that this technical control is no longer available. The team agreed that we need to monitor this situation and communicate the changes to the wider organisation.

Further discussion focused on the rise in incidents within the Corporate Services business area compared to the previous year. The Executive Team emphasised the need to be proactive throughout the year and closely monitor this situation.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the report and agreed this report be submitted to Audit Committee on 6 May 2025.

Annual report on hospitality and gifts

Graeme Forrester introduced the annual report on hospitality and gifts, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the report.
- Agree, subject to any required amendments, this report be submitted to Audit Committee on 6 May 2025.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the report and agreed this report be submitted to Audit Committee on 6 May 2025.

Annual report on bribery and fraud 2024/25

Graeme Forrester introduced the annual report on bribery and fraud, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the report.
- Agree, subject to any required amendments, this report be submitted to Audit Committee on 6 May 2025.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the report and agreed this report be submitted to Audit Committee on 6 May 2025.

Graeme Forrester left the meeting.

7. Confidential item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

8. Draft Executive Team agenda: 22 April 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 22 April 2025.

9. Executive Team action tracker

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the action tracker.

10. Any other business

There was no other business.

11. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

12. Executive Team communications

Simon Ebbett joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communications.

Simon Ebbett left the meeting.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 22 April 2025 at 14.00, Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Tuesday 22 April 2025 14.00am

Audit Scotland offices, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
Alison Cumming
Stephen Boyle
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver
John Cornett

In attendance:

Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support
Jonny Steen, Head of Quality
Gill Miller, Senior Manager
Owen Smith, Director of Audit Quality and Appointments
John Gilchrist, Manager
Jennifer Doolan, Senior Auditor
Parminder Singh, Manager
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources
Neil Cameron, Head of Professional Support and Learning
Gordon Robertson, Learning and Development Manager
Pauline Gillen, Audit Director
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 14 April 2025 and confidential minutes of Executive Team meeting on 14 April 2025

The draft minutes dated 14 April 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, and all correspondence items noted for approval.

2. Audit quality update

Paul O'Brien, Jonny Steen and Gill Miller joined the meeting.

Paul O'Brien introduced the audit quality update, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the paper.
- Offer any comments.
- Approve the paper, subject to any requested amendments, for discussion at the Audit Committee on 6 May.

The Executive Team thanked the team for a useful and balanced report and noted that there is good genuine progress being made on audit quality.

During discussion, the Executive Team reflected on the grade 4 outcome and the potential reputational risk that this could bring. Members noted that plans are in place to support audit teams. They also noted that further monitoring has been conducted to identify and understand the reasons behind this outcome so preventative measures can be put in place.

Further discussion focused on the quality improvement action plan and if PABV can provide support to the Innovation and Quality team to help drive continuous improvement of the actions.

The Executive Team discussed the timeliness of audits and noted that strategies are in place to support these audits get back on track before the end of the current audit appointment round.

Following discussion, the Executive Team approved the paper, subject to the required amendments, for discussion at the Audit Committee on 6 May 2025.

3. Transparency report

Pauline Gillen joined the meeting.

Paul O'Brien provided an update on the Transparency report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Consider Comment on the draft Transparency Report.
- Approve the report's submission to the Audit Committee on 6 May.

Following discussion, the Executive Team approved the report's submission to the Audit Committee on 6 May, subject to the required amendments to language and tone and ensuring consistency with the Quality of Public Audit in Scotland report.

Paul O'Brien, Jonny Steen and Gill Miller left the meeting.

4. Confidential item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

5. Internal Audit report: Learning and development

Neil Cameron and Gordon Robertson joined the meeting.

Neil Cameron introduced the Internal Audit Learning and development report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

During discussion, the Executive Team thanked the team for their hard work and noted the strong level of assurance including several points of good practice and three minor recommendations, two of which have been addressed.

Further discussion focused on training, with the Executive Team being assured that training is approved in alignment with business needs. Members were also content with the clear and effective management responses.

Following discussion, the Executive Team was content to note the report.

Neil Cameron and Gordon Robertson left the meeting.

6. Diversity and Equality Policy

Susan Burgess joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess provided a brief introduction on the changes to the Diversity and Equality policy, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note Consider the changes proposed in the policy attached.
- Note the report and consultation undertaken.
- Approve the revised policy.

Following discussion, the Executive Team approved the revised policy.

7. Annual review of Counter Fraud Policy

Susan Burgess provided a brief introduction on the changes to the Counter Fraud policy, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note Consider the changes proposed in the policy attached.
- Note the report and consultation undertaken.
- Approve the revised policy.

During the discussion, the Executive Team noted the extension of the review period from one year to two years, with the option for ad-hoc changes if necessary.

Following discussion, the Executive Team approved the revised policy.

8. Review of Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) performance

Susan Burgess provided a brief introduction on the changes to the Counter Fraud policy, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the report.
- Discuss the areas proposed which the committee will take forward as a priority for 2025/26.

Following discussion, the Executive Team were content to note the report.

9. Draft RemCo agenda: 6 May 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the RemCo on 6 May 2025.

Susan Burgess left the meeting.

10. Draft Audit Committee agenda: 6 May 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Audit Committee on 6 May 2025.

11. Draft Executive Team agenda: 28 April 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 28 April with the following amendments:

- Extend the discussion time for the six-monthly participation in professional groups paper.
- Helen Gray to assess if the paper on external stakeholder engagement activity and MSP survey results should be included in next week's Executive Team meeting.

The Executive Team noted that the Mentors will be attending both the Executive Team meeting and Strategic session on 28 April 2025. Helena Gray confirmed that a review of the reverse mentoring programme will take place in August 2025.

12. Any other business

There was no other business.

13. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

14. Executive Team communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communications.

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 28 April 2025 at 10.00, Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 28 April 2025 10.00am

Audit Scotland offices, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
Alison Cumming
Stephen Boyle
John Cornett
Nicola Bryson (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver

In attendance:

David Robertson, IT Manager
Ian Metcalf, Corporate Performance Officer
Sara Tait, Corporate Support Officer
Nicola Paton, Digital Project Manager
Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support
Lee Ovens, Executive Assistant
Callum Aitken, Modern Apprentice
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser
Mentors: David Fraser, Cate Holder, Sarah Dunsmore, Kirsty Lawson,
Fergus Sweeney, Munya Mzenda, Niki Ross

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 22 April 2025 and confidential minutes of Executive Team meeting on 22 April 2025

The draft minutes dated 22 April 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting subject to minor amendment, and all correspondence items noted for approval.

Executive Team welcomed the Mentors to the meeting to be part of the strategic discussions.

2. Annual assurance reports

David Robertson, Ian Metcalf and Sara Tait joined the meeting.

Ian Metcalf introduced the annual assurance reports, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the suite of reports set out in the tables below.
- Subject to any amendments, approve the submission of the reports as set out in the table at paragraph 7 below.
- Note the circulation of other annual assurance reports for ET consideration via correspondence/ at ET meetings as set out in the table at paragraph 8 below.

Information governance and security

David Robertson introduced the annual report on information governance and security, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Agree, subject to any required amendments, this report be submitted to the Audit Scotland Board on 20 May 2025.

During discussion, Executive Team noted the biggest significant risk to the organisation is the random attacks in the public sector. Members were assured our training, processes and systems are working.

Following discussion, Executive Team noted the report and agreed for it to be presented at the Audit Scotland Board in May, subject to minor amendment.

David Robertson left the meeting.

Complaints report

Ian Metcalf introduced the annual complaints report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Agree, subject to any required amendments, this report be submitted to the Audit Scotland Board on 20 May 2025.

During discussion, Executive Team noted the slight increase in the number of complaints and the categorisation, and the steps in place for any further training required by colleagues.

Following discussion, Executive Team approved the report for submission to the Board on 20 May 2025.

Freedom of Information and Environmental Information

Ian Metcalf introduced the annual report on Freedom of Information and Environment Information, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the contents of this report.
- Agree, subject to any required amendments, this report be submitted to the Audit Scotland Board on 20 May 2025.

During discussion, Executive Team noted the reduced number of Freedom of Information requests since last year and were assured our arrangements for responding to requests are working well.

Executive Team discussed the costs for responding to requests and benchmarking this with the other audit agencies and noted the inconsistency of time recording to the correct code.

Following discussion, Executive Team approved the paper for onward submission to the Audit Scotland Board in May 2025.

Action: Vicki to ask the UK&I COOs about the costs of FOI Requests.

Action: John to remind ASG colleagues of the time recording code to be used.

Ian Metcalf and Sara Tait left the meeting.

3. Information Security Management Policy

Nicola Paton joined the meeting.

Nicola Paton provided an update on the refreshed Information Security Management Policy, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the refreshed policy and provide approval before the policy is submitted to the Audit Scotland Board for final sign off.
- Approve the inclusion of a new objective in the policy for supplier evaluation.
- Consider providing support to communicate to the wider business.

During discussion, Executive Team welcomed the report, thanked the team for their hard work for having us transferred to the new ISO standard and were content on the management of current and new suppliers to the new objective.

Following discussion, Executive Team approved the inclusion of the new objective and approved the refreshed policy for submission to the Board

for final sign-off.

Nicola Paton left the meeting.

4. Participation in Professional Groups: update

Paul O'Brien joined the meeting.

Paul O'Brien introduced the update on Audit Scotland's participation in external professional groups, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the content of the paper and provide comments.
- Provide thoughts on the matters highlighted to inform future discussions at these groups in the coming six months.

During discussion, Executive Team noted the activity around Non-investment asset valuations, Local audit reform, WGA and membership to FRAB and IPSAB.

Executive Team agreed to monitor any technical changes around Non-investment asset valuations for costs to deliver audits, a blog to be circulated to staff and further updates to the Accounts Commission on the Local Audit office reform and further engagement with Scottish Government for providing a written submission to FRAAB before every meeting.

Following discussion, Executive Team recorded their thanks for a really informative paper and were content to note the report.

Action: Paul to issue a blog to colleagues on the Local Audit Office Reform

Action: Paul to speak to Carole Grant on FRAAB written submissions with Scottish Government

Action: Paul to provide regular updates to Executive Team on the progress of the Local Audit Office Reform.

Paul O'Brien left the meeting.

5. Draft Accounts Commission agenda: 15 May 2025

Lee Ovens and Callum Aitken joined the meeting.

During discussion Executive Team noted that further testing had been completed in relation to the implementation of new technology being used for live streaming, and that an ethics check is now in place before every meeting on agenda items.

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Accounts Commission on 15 May 2025.

Lee Ovens and Callum Aitken left the meeting.

6. Draft Executive Team agenda: 5 May 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 5 May 2025.

7. Any other business

There was no other business.

8. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

9. Executive Team communications

Executive Team decided not to issue a communication this week due to the volume of internal matters planned for publication.

10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 5 May 2025 at 10.00, Glasgow.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 5 May 2025 10.00am

Audit Scotland offices, NMP, Glasgow, EH3 9DN

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
Alison Cumming
John Cornett
Nicola Bryson (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver
Stephen Boyle

In attendance:

Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources
Sharon Kewley, Business Support Manager
Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 5 May 2025

The draft minutes dated 5 May 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, and the correspondence item International Engagement; Six monthly update was noted subject with minor comments for future updates.

2. Neonatal Care Leave Proposal

Susan Burgess joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess provided a brief introduction to the Neonatal Care Leave Proposal, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note Consider the legislative change on the new Neonatal Care leave and whether it wishes to offer an enhancement to the statutory rate of pay for this leave.
- Approve the proposed addition to the existing Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave policy, subject to any feedback.

Following discussion, Executive Team noted the legislative change and approved the addition to the exiting Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave policy.

3. Pets in the Office Policy

Sharon Kewley joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess introduced the new Pets in the Office Policy, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the report, risk assessment undertaken at appendix one, draft policy at appendix two and consultation undertaken.
- Approve the introduction of the policy, subject to any amendments agreed during the meeting.

During discussion, ET asked that the latter part of the policy which provides guidance on how to manage dogs attending the office is consistent with the decision to only allow assistance dogs in the office. I.e references to 'pets' in the office should be changed to 'assistance dogs' in the office.

Following discussion, Executive Team noted the report and subject to minor amendment approved the introduction to the policy.

Susan Burgess and Sharon Kewley left the meeting.

4. Updated Ethics Guidance

Paul O'Brien joined the meeting.

Paul O'Brien introduced the proposals for updating Audit Scotland's ethics guidance, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the revisions to Audit Scotland's guidance.
- Agree the accompanying guidance and approve submission to the Audit Scotland Board on 20 May.

During discussion, Executive Team noted that our internal procedures are in a good place for assurance purposes.

Following discussion, Executive Team noted the revision to the guidance, and subject to minor amendment, approved the submission to Audit Scotland Board on 20 May.

Paul O'Brien left the meeting.

5. Draft management accounts – verbal update

Stuart Dennis joined the meeting.

Stuart provided a verbal update on our year end position highlighting our overall underspend of £2.1m of which £1.8m of this is pension related and £209k of it is our actual operating underspend.

Stuart also noted the good position in relation to our aged debtors.

Further discussion was on timing of fees due from Firms and the VAT accrual for budget planning and how we position this in relation to our update to SCPA.

Executive Team noted the update and thanked Stuart for the year end outturn.

Stuart Dennis left the meeting.

6. Draft Board agenda: 20 May 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Board on 20 May 2025.

7. Draft Executive Team agenda: 12 May 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 12 May 2025.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

9. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

10. Executive Team communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication.

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 12 May 2025 at 10.00, Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday 12 May 2025 10.00am

Audit Scotland offices, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
Alison Cumming
Stephen Boyle
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver
John Cornett

In attendance:

Simon Ebbett, Head of Communications
Stuart Dennis, Corporate Finance Manager
Graeme Forrester, Head of Performance and Corporate Governance
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources
Alan Barrow, Senior HR Advisor
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 5 May 2025

The draft minutes dated 5 May 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting subject to minor amendment, and all correspondence items noted for approval.

2. Confidential minutes of the Extraordinary Recruitment Board meeting on 5 May 2025

The draft minutes dated 5 May 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting subject to minor amendment.

3. Annual Report and Accounts

Simon Ebbett and Stuart Dennis joined the meeting.

Simon Ebbett provided an update on the Annual Report and Accounts, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Following discussion, the Executive Team was content to note the report, subject to the amendments discussed. They will receive the final draft by correspondence week commencing 26 May, before it is submitted to the Board for approval on 3 June 2025.

Simon Ebbett and Stuart Dennis left the meeting.

4. 2024/25 Internal Audit Annual Report

Graeme Forrester joined the meeting.

Graeme Forrester introduced the Internal Audit Annual Report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team welcomed the strong result and was content to note the Internal Audit Annual Report.

Action: Graeme will follow up with wbg on the possibility of introducing the newly published public sector internal audit standards to the Audit Committee.

5. Internal Audit Recommendations Progress Report

Graeme Forrester introduced the Internal Audit Recommendations Progress Report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the progress on the implementation of outstanding audit recommendations.
- Agree that the report, subject to any required amendments, be submitted to the Audit Committee meeting of 3 June 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team raised concerns on the three outstanding recommendations and asked for assurance that there would be no further slippage.

Further discussion was on the budget holder training with the Executive Team agreeing that it should become standard practice, and a suggestion put forward to the Audit Committee to remove it from the internal audit update cycle. Additionally, members agreed that the budget holder survey is reviewed with the aim of reducing the level of detail.

Following discussion, the Executive Team was content to note the report and agreed the report is submitted to the Audit Committee meeting on 3 June 2025.

Action: Helena will discuss with David the prioritisation of capacity to prevent any further delays in addressing the outstanding recommendations of the CIRP.

Graeme Forrester left the meeting.

6. Bullying and Harassment Policy

Susan Burgess and Alan Barrow joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess introduced the Bullying and Harassment Policy, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the report and changes proposed to the policy, attached as appendix one.
- Approve the changes proposed and agree that the policy can proceed to the Board for final approval.

During discussion, the Executive Team reflected on the support available to managers and if there is potentially more, we could do in this area.

Members agreed that it would be useful to determine whether colleagues have reached out to the mental health advocates and to gain insight into their experiences.

The Executive Team considered the recent Supreme Court judgment and its potential impact on our organisation. They agreed to wait for guidance to be issued before revisiting this matter.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the report, subject to minor amendments, and asked that the revised report is shared with them prior to submission to the Board for approval on 3 June 2025.

Action: Susan will share the Bullying and Harassment Policy with the Chair of RemCo.

Action: Susan will follow up with the mental health advocates to hear about their experiences so far.

Susan Burgess and Alan Barrow left the meeting.

7. Draft Executive Team agenda: 19 May 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 19 May 2025.

The Executive Team reflected on the Quarter 4 Performance Reports and noted that, as part of the performance management review, the new format reports will begin from Quarter 1.

8. Executive Team action tracker

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the action tracker.

Action: Niki to update action tracker and resend to the Executive Team.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

10. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

11. Executive Team communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication.

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 19 May 2025 at 10.00, Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday, 19 May 2025 at 9.30am

Audit Scotland offices, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN and MS Teams

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
Alison Cumming
Areti Magoufis (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver
John Cornett
Stephen Boyle

In attendance:

Fiona McKie, Director of Corporate Services (observing)
Graeme Forrester, Head of Performance and Corporate Governance
Ian Metcalfe, Corporate Performance Officer
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources
David Loudon, Assistant Manager, Human Resources
Owen Smith, Director of Audit Quality and Appointments
Jennifer Doolan, Senior Auditor, Audit Quality and Appointments
Rebecca Smallwood, Correspondence Manager, Performance Audit and Best Value
Sarah Watters, Secretary to the Accounts Commission
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services Group

Welcome

Vicki Bibby started the meeting by welcoming Fiona McKie, Director of Corporate Services to her first Executive Team meeting.

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 12 May 2025

The draft minutes dated 12 May 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting subject to minor amendment.

Correspondence items

The Finance dashboard and aged accounts receivable was noted for approval.

2. Q4 Performance Reporting

Graeme Forrester, Ian Metcalfe, Corporate Performance Officer, Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources, David Loudon, Assistant Manager, Human Resources, Owen Smith, Director of Audit Quality and Appointments and Jennifer Doolan, Senior Auditor, Audit Quality and Appointments joined the meeting.

Corporate

Graeme Forrester introduced the Q4 2024/25 Corporate Performance report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Review the performance in 2024/25.
- Consider the issues affecting performance, the actions identified and whether any additional management action is required.

Executive Team discussed how Performance Audit and Best Value (PABV) is refining how non-audit time is reported by excluding non-audit-facing business management staff. It was agreed that the Executive Director of Performance Audit and Best Value would provide a verbal update to the Board on ongoing work around non-audit time reporting, including a review of utilisation rates and the sharing of best practice.

Executive Team reflected on the progress made over the past year, particularly noting improvements in delivery rates, completion of mandatory training and management of flexi-time balances.

There was further discussion regarding the amber status of the Audit Quality Assurance results. While the Grade 1 outcome was celebrated, concerns remain around the lower-grade results in financial audit. Innovation & Quality (I&Q) are working to shift the trajectory of these outcomes. It was agreed that the performance report should reflect this ongoing effort by updating the narrative to acknowledge the progress and the areas requiring continued attention.

The Executive Team noted the report.

Action: Graeme to note in the report that the performance and audit delivery percentages for planned timescales was impacted by delays associated with the UK general election.

Action: Graeme/Owen to amend the Audit Quality Assurance Results trajectory to point downward and update the narrative on the Performance report to reflect this movement.

People

Susan Burgess introduced the Q4 People report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the exit interview feedback from colleagues.
- Note the report and workforce infographic.
- Consider and discuss the key findings in relation to Q4's workforce data and ensure any key messages and actions are shared within business group management teams.

Executive Team were given an update on recent Remco discussions which highlighted a significant drop in excess annual leave carryover and improved flexi-time balances, though some high balances still need attention. Organisational change and its impact on staff remain key considerations. Turnover remains steady, with no major issues reported across teams.

Executive Team discussed the importance of clear communication with staff regarding how change is being managed, what is expected of them and how a positive culture is being supported. The Executive Team agreed that the People Report should continue to emphasise these connections, particularly in relation to the Strategic Improvement Programme Board project and the broader cultural shifts.

Questions were raised about the level of peer and mentor support available to staff applying for internal roles. It was acknowledged that more could be done centrally, particularly to support diversity and equality outcomes. Encouraging staff to proactively seek support was also highlighted as important.

The Executive Team noted the report.

Action: Graeme/ David to confirm with the R&MI project group how special circumstances, where additional hours are worked, will be captured in the new system, ensuring clarity on alignment with existing flexi-time policy and time off in lieu arrangements.

Additional Fees

Owen Smith introduced the Q4 Additional Fees report, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the level of additional fees requested and approved for 2022/23 and 2023/24 audits.

Owen reported that Glasgow City Council's fees have been agreed, subject to VAT confirmation, and noted that several 2023–24 audits are still pending sign-off, which could generate additional income. While our additional fees may appear high, they are consistent with increases seen in comparable organisations in England for the 2022–23 local government audit cycle, indicating that our system is operating as expected.

A reflection was shared on the implications of current fee trends for future discussions around the public audit model and procurement strategy. It was acknowledged that fees remain a key concern for the Accounts Commission and are frequently raised by stakeholders. Ongoing dialogue on this topic is expected.

The Executive Team noted the report.

Action: Vicki/Owen to discuss a project plan to outline a timeline and approach for the upcoming review of fees and funding.

Ian Metcalfe, Susan Burgess, David Loudon, Owen Smith and Jennifer Doolan left the meeting.

3. Annual Report on Correspondence and Whistleblowing

Rebecca Smallwood, Correspondence Manager, Performance Audit and Best Value, joined the meeting.

Rebecca introduced the Annual Report on Correspondence and Whistleblowing, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the contents of the 2024/25 Annual Report on Correspondence and Whistleblowing.

During discussion, it was highlighted that Correspondence levels have remained steady compared to last year, due to fewer issues of concern being raised. However, concerns related to local government continue to make up a larger proportion of the total. There is also a growing trend in the complexity of concerns, particularly those involving multiple bodies or auditors. It was noted that the current IT system limits the ability to quantify this, but work is underway to implement a new system that will enhance management information and provide a more structured process for handling correspondence.

The Executive Team noted the report.

Rebecca left the meeting.

4. 2024/25 Governance Statement and Certificate of Assurance

Graeme introduced the 2024/25 Governance Statement and Certificate of Assurance, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Executive Team is invited to:

- Consider the Group-level Certificates of Assurance.
- Identify any issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Audit Committee or the Audit Scotland Board at their meetings on 3 June 2025 with the Annual Accounts and governance statements.
- Recommend the Chief Operating Officer provides an Audit Scotland-level Certificate of Assurance to the Audit Committee and Board as part of the annual assurance process.

It was noted that there is currently no Certificate of Assurance covering the Accounts Commission. It was agreed that a Certificate of Assurance be prepared and issued to the Secretary of the Accounts Commission Secretary as a delegated budget holder, to ensure there are no gaps in assurance.

The Executive noted the report.

Action: Graeme to arrange for a Certificate of Assurance for the Secretary of the Accounts Commission.

5. Review of Risk Register

Graeme introduced the Review of the Risk Register, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Consider the risk register.
- Determine whether additional management action is required.
- Note the ongoing review of the Risk Management Framework.

Graeme highlighted updates to the risk register, particularly around cyber security. He noted that Audit Scotland has successfully transitioned to the ISO 27001:2022 standard, with a recommendation for accreditation, providing independent assurance of the organisation's information security.

Concerns were raised about the current risk register, noting that it contains too many risks and lacks clarity in the mitigation narratives. It was noted that a paper will be presented to the Executive Team on 2 June, outlining a revised framework and updated presentation of the risk register, focusing on tracking risk movement rather than reproducing the full register. Internal audit will review and test the revised approach in July,

providing assurance that the new process will effectively support risk management.

It was suggested that performance risks related to audit quality should be reviewed to ensure alignment and consistency across all relevant governance documents.

Action: Graeme to speak to Owen about the performance risks in audit quality.

6. Draft Internal Audit Plan

Graeme introduced the Draft Internal Audit Plan, copies of which had been previously circulated.

It was noted that roles and responsibilities around budgeting and financial reporting need to be clarified, not only within the finance team, but also across the wider organisation, including budget holders in business groups. Emphasis was placed on the importance of aligning the narrative to support a broader cultural shift in financial accountability.

The Executive Team noted the report.

7. Draft Audit Committee agenda: 3 June 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Audit Committee on 3 June 2025.

Graeme left the meeting.

8. Draft Accounts Commission agenda: 12 June 2025

The Executive Team noted the success of the Accounts Commission meeting held on 5 June and thanked the support team.

Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Accounts Commission on 12 June 2025.

Action: Sarah to confirm with the AQA team whether the Audit Quality report item can be removed from the agenda.

9. Draft Executive Team agenda: 2 June 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 2 June 2025.

10. Executive Team action tracker

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the action tracker.

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

12. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

13. Executive Team communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication.

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 2 June 2025 at 10.00, Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday, 2 June 2025 at 10.00am

Audit Scotland offices, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN and MS Teams

Present

Vicki Bibby
Helena Gray
Alison Cumming
Stephen Boyle (Chair)
Fiona McKie
John Cornett
Nicola Bryson (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver

In attendance:

Owen Smith, Director of Audit Quality and Appointments
John Gilchrist, Manager
Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support
Graeme Forrester, Head of Performance and Corporate Governance
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources
Alan Barrow, Senior Human Resources Advisor
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services Group

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 19 May 2025

The draft minutes dated 19 May 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting subject to minor amendment.

Correspondence items

The Q4 Financial Performance Report, Financial Performance Summary and draft Audit Scotland Annual Report were noted, with follow-up discussion on sharper budgetary control processes to be implemented.

Action: Budgetary Controls discussion to be scheduled at Leadership Group

Action: Finance to discuss pension disclosures with relevant ET members in advance of figures being included within annual accounts

2. Stakeholder Feedback Procurement

Owen Smith and John Gilchrist joined the meeting.

Owen Smith provided a brief overview on the procurement of stakeholder feedback, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Approve the procurement strategy.

During discussion, Executive Team requested the possibility of a shorter contract due to the wider impact work being undertaken at the moment, along with highlighting aspects of the procurement scope for the tender exercise for inclusion around more in-depth independent analysis for further insight and ensuring any supplier's cyber security is consistent with our policies.

Further discussion focused on specific feedback from bodies on the feedback survey, recognising further reflections are required on acknowledgements and follow-up of feedback provided as well as phrasing of questions in line with status of audit work at that time.

Following discussion, Executive Group approved the procurement strategy and agreed that business groups have involvement in the specification of the tender ensuring value for money of a contract.

Action: John and Alison to work with AQA on the tender specification.

Owen Smith and John Gilchrist left the meeting.

3. Planning 2025/26 Annual Audits: Guidance and Conference

Paul O'Brien joined the meeting

Paul O'Brien gave a brief overview of planning the 2025/26 Annual Audits, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to comment on the proposed:

- Target audit completion dates for 2025/26 annual audits.
- Annual audit activities for 2025/26.
- Programme and format for the Annual Audit Planning Conference planned for October 2025.

During discussion, members noted the focus areas for their business units and in relation to wider scope areas that might have significant national or sectoral risk, Executive Team recommended that college sector audits risk identification may require further attention to be in line with other sectors.

Finally, Executive Team noted more emphasis was required in the planning guidance on the Whole of Government accounts.

Further discussion, focused on the planning conference agenda. Executive Team requested an additional item on FPAM with the event to start earlier to incorporate this and for a firm partner session to be included.

Following discussion, Executive Team supported the proposed annual audit activities for 2025/26 and the target completion dates within the Planning guidance with, and noted the draft planning conference draft agenda.

Action: Paul to liaise with Carole Grant on Whole of Government Accounts addition into the guidance

Paul O'Brien left the meeting.

4. Review of the Risk Management Framework

Graeme Forrester joined the meeting.

Graeme Forrester introduced the review of the Risk Management Framework, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the work which has been undertaken on reviewing the Risk Management Framework.
- Note that a 'live' review of the Risk Management Framework is planned as part of the Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26.
- Provide any feedback or further direction for amendments in advance of the Internal Audit review.

During discussion, Executive noted the work to date to reduce the detail to focus on the current changes in the risk environment and enable more active scrutiny around risk management and risk holders.

Further discussion focused on the thresholds for the scoring and management of potential risks at certain scoring within exhibit 4. Executive Team supported further work to be undertaken in this area.

Finally, Executive Team noted the governance arrangements for approval prior to submission to Audit Committee in September, along with confirmation that the revised model to Risk Management should be implemented shortly after.

Following discussion, Executive Team supported the direction of travel of the review of the Risk Management Framework and strengthening our risk ownership into practice.

Action: Graeme to add more detail to the Accountable Officer responsibilities

Action: Graeme to take up Carole Grants offer to feed in views to the Risk Management Framework threshold scoring categories.

Action: Graeme to schedule the Risk Management Framework to a future ET meeting prior to the Audit Committee meeting in September.

Graeme Forrester left the meeting.

5. Staff Handbook Policy Review

Susan Burgess and Alan Barrow joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess introduced the latest review of Staff Handbook policies, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the report and changes proposed to the policies and guidance, attached as appendices one, two and three.
- Approve the changes proposed and agree that the staff handbook can be updated accordingly.

Accident and Near Miss Reporting Policy

During discussion, Executive Team focused on trained first aiders and were assured of the processes in place to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities, but requested further detail of the number of first aiders per office and in office cover arrangements.

Following discussion, Executive Team noted the minor change and move to a 3 year review.

Action: Susan to provide the number of first aiders per office and in office cover arrangements.

Agency Workers Policy

During discussion, Executive Team noted the minor changes and updated links which brought in an approval level for financial implications from Executive Directors.

Further discussion, Executive Team acknowledged his policy may be utilised more to support a more flexible approach to working and help address our current vacancy rate

Following discussion, Executive Team approved the policy.

Self-Employed Consultant Guidance

During discussion, Executive Team noted the minor changes that are more direct with HMRC tax guidance and were assured that if any material changes occur in this area that our guidance would be reviewed outwith the 3 year review cycle.

Following discussion, Executive Team approved the guidance subject to minor amendment.

Action: Vicki to provide wording on previous employees returning as consultants.

Susan Burgess and Alan Barrow left the meeting.

6. Confidential Item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

7. Draft Executive Team agenda: 9 June 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted an updated proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 9 June 2025.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

9. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

10. Executive Team communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication.

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 9 June 2025 at 10.00, Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday, 9 June 2025 at 10.00am

Audit Scotland offices, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN and MS Teams

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
Alison Cumming
Stephen Boyle
Fiona McKie
John Cornett
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

Kenny Oliver

In attendance:

Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support
Graeme Forrester, Head of Performance and Corporate Governance
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources
Stuart Dennis, Corporate Finance Manager
Wojciech Kuzma, Finance Business Partner
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser, Corporate Services Group
Debra Hadden, HR Advisor

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 2 June 2025 and confidential minutes of Executive Team meeting on 2 June 2025

The draft minutes dated 2 June 2025 and confidential draft minutes dated 2 June 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting subject to minor amendment.

Correspondence items

The Starting Salary Guidance and the Security Vetting and Clearance Policy were noted, subject to minor amendment.

Action: Susan to review and update the Security Vetting and Clearance Policy by verifying the list of professions requiring a Level 2 disclosure (including Alison's suggested wording) and refining the section on the disclosure process for criminal convictions.

2. ET Strategic Sessions 26 May 2025 and 28 May 2025: FPAM discussion paper

The discussion paper dated 26 May 2025 and 28 May 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting, subject to minor amendment.

Action: Stephen will draft the appropriate wording for the unqualified audit opinion to be included in the minutes. Change to be shared with Sally and Paul.

3. Participation in Professional Groups: Verbal update

Paul O'Brien joined the meeting.

Paul O'Brien provided an update on the main themes that have been discussed with external professional groups since the six-monthly update to Executive Team on 28 April 2025:

- CIPFA/LASAAC Local Authority Code Board met last week and confirmed that the external review of its governance and effectiveness will begin shortly.
- Longer-term financial reporting reforms are moving forward with CIPFA.
- The Local Government Pension Scheme interim reporting will commence in September.
- Longer term projects include sustainability reporting, group accounting and the Redmond Review.
- 2026/27 consultation on the Code will be about sharing some of the early thinking on longer-term issues/concerns and stakeholder views. No reforms will be implemented before 2026/27. The only proposals will be to withdraw the expenditure and funding analysis and to change the structure and format of the Code itself.

During discussion, The Executive Team agreed that a dedicated discussion on the Code would be beneficial to explore the potential of establishing a specific workstream, allowing Audit Scotland to take a more proactive approach in this area.

Further discussion was on the ongoing issues related to infrastructure assets, with members noting that LASAAC intends to consult in this area.

Action: Paul to share longer-term financial reporting paper with the Executive Team.

Action: Paul to facilitate the setup of an Executive Team strategic session focused on the Code.

Action: Paul to lead a discussion on infrastructure assets involving Vicki, John Cornett, Helena, John Boyd.

The Executive Team welcomed the update.

Paul O'Brien left the meeting.

4. Budget Holder Survey Response

Graeme Forrester joined the meeting.

Graeme Forrester gave a brief overview of the results of the recent budget holder survey, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to note:

- The results indicate that majority of budget holders have a clear understanding of their role and are satisfied that the information provided by Finance allows them to monitor and track their budget.
- The Finance team will be in direct contact with four respondents who indicated they would like to discuss training and support.
- A similar survey will be repeated on an annual basis by the Finance team to monitor and to provide the Executive Team with assurance.
- A review of budgetary and financial reporting, with a focus on Group-level arrangements is included in the 2025/26 internal audit plan.

During discussion, the Executive Team reviewed the small number of respondents requiring training and support. They requested that this be completed within three months, followed by a check-in to assess whether they feel equipped to fulfil their role as budget holders. An update to be presented to the Executive Team to provide assurance.

Further discussion was on whether the focus should be proactively ensuring that new starts receive the necessary budget holder training.

The Executive Team recognised the impact of organisational changes and agreed to maintain continuous review of empowerment and delegation within the budget holder process.

Following discussion, the Executive Team was content to note the report.

Action: Graeme will provide assurance to the Executive Team that all budget holders are able to fulfil this role by September 2025.

Action: HR and Finance will ensure all new budget holders receive the necessary training within one month of their start date.

Graeme Forrester left the meeting.

5. Confidential Item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

6. Confidential Item

This item was subject to a separate confidential minute.

7. Staff Handbook Policy Review: Volunteering Policy

Kirsty Gibbins and Debra Hadden joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess introduced the Volunteering Policy, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Consider the changes proposed in the policy attached.
- Approve the revised policy.

During discussion, the Executive Team noted the ongoing efforts to promote the policy across the wider organisation and acknowledged that this review helps to highlight that we need to strengthen the wording around what we expect of staff who are using the time.

Further discussion focused on incorporating a team-building element by encouraging teams to participate in volunteering days together.

Following discussion, the Executive Team noted the update and agreed that the policy be reviewed every three years.

Susan Burgess and Debra Hadden left the meeting.

8. Draft Executive Team agenda: 16 June 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 16 June 2025.

9. Any other business

There was no other business.

10. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

11. Executive Team communications

The Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication.

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 16 June 2025 at 10.00, Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday, 16 June 2025 at 10.00am

Audit Scotland offices, 102 West Port, Edinburgh EH3 9DN and MS Teams

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
Alison Cumming
Stephen Boyle
John Cornett
Kenny Oliver
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

In attendance:

Fiona McKie, Director of Corporate Services
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources
David Loudon, Human Resources Assistant Manager
Gemma Diamond, Director of Innovation and Transformation
Michelle Borland, Head of Organisational Improvement
Wojciech Kuzma, Finance Business Partner
Paul Withers, Business Manager Audit Services
Jean Goodband, Business Manager Performance Audit and Best Value
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 9 June 2025 and confidential minutes of the Executive Team meeting on 9 June 2025

The draft minutes dated 9 June 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting subject to minor amendment.

Action: Vicki will provide additional wording for the Lease Car item in the confidential minute.

2. Minutes of the Extraordinary SIP Board meeting on 9 June 2025

The draft minutes dated 9 June 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Staff Handbook policy review

Susan Burgess and David Loudon joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess provided a brief overview of the recently reviewed policies, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the report and changes proposed to the policies.
- Approve the changes proposed and agree that the staff handbook can be updated accordingly.

Working Time Policy

During discussion, the Executive Team noted the approved.

Following discussion, the Executive Team approved the policy changes and agreed the update to the staff handbook.

Driving for Business Policy

During discussion, the Executive Team reflected on whether the organisation should continue handling all checks or move the responsibility to the owner/driver to ensure compliance and self-declare to the organisation.

Further discussion focused on the need for additional clarification within the policy regarding employees using personal vehicles for business.

Following discussion, Executive Team agreed that further work on the policy is required before final approval, including reviewing industry standards, to define both Audit Scotland's and employees' responsibilities

Action: Susan to undertake further work to bring back to a future Executive Team meeting.

Religious and Philosophical Belief Policy

During discussion, the Executive Team examined the level of detail and specificity within the policy, ensuring it strikes the right balance between clarity and practicality.

Following discussion, the Executive Team approved the policy changes and agreed the update to the staff handbook.

4. Operational Planning Refresh

Gemma Diamond, Michelle Borland, Wojciech Kuzma, Paul Withers and Jean Goodband joined the meeting.

Gemma Diamond provided a brief overview of the refresh of Operational Planning, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Agree the proposed approach.

- Agree assumptions to be used for the 2026/27 budget development process.
- Agree the timetable for the 2026/27 to 2027/28 operational planning process.

Vicki Bibby welcomed Paul and Jean to their first Executive Team meeting, followed by introductions around the room.

During discussion, the Executive Team agreed that the Operational Planning Group (OPG) should facilitate timely discussions across business groups to support more effective development before final approval of the Operational Plan.

Further discussion highlighted the need for Executive Directors requiring additional checkpoints to support deliverable sign-off, including budget details and workforce planning for informed decision-making.

The Executive Team agreed that timings and flexibility are a key consideration in ensuring that the budget is in a high-level state by September.

The Executive Team agreed that the Operational Plan will go to the Leadership Group meeting in August as planned, with the OPG group conducting further analysis to collectively review the core budget, assumptions and the required changes for the next three years.

Following discussion, the Executive Team requested that the OPG undertake further work to provide more in-depth detail and bring this back to an Executive Team meeting for further review.

Action: John/Alison to have a detailed budget discussion with Carole and then feedback to Gemma/Michelle.

Action: Gemma/Michelle to bring back a more detailed paper on budget assumptions to the Executive Team for further review.

5. Draft Executive Team agenda: 30 June 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 30 June 2025, with an additional item to be added on Operational Planning.

6. Any other business

There was no other business.

7. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

8. Executive Team communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication. This includes a special recognition to both Zahrah Mahood for being made an MBE for voluntary services and John Cornett who is the new President of CIPFA Scotland. The Executive Team extended their congratulations to both.

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

9. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 30 June 2025 at 10.00, Glasgow.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday, 30 June 2025 at 10.00am

Audit Scotland offices, Nelson Mandela Place, Glasgow and MS Teams

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
Alison Cumming
John Cornett
Kenny Oliver
Nic Bryson (Minutes)

Apologies:

Stephen Boyle

In attendance:

Fiona McKie, Director of Corporate Services
David Robertson, Head of Digital Services
Nicola Paton, Digital Project Manager
Susan Burgess, Head of Human Resources
Gemma Diamond, Director of Innovation and Transformation
Paul O'Brien, Director of Quality and Support
Jonny Steen, Head of Quality
Gill Miller, Senior Manager, Performance Audit Approach and Quality
Kirsty Gibbins, Communications Adviser

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 16 June 2025

The draft minutes dated 16 June 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting subject to amendment.

Correspondence items

The Audit Delivery update report was noted.

2. Confidential minutes of the Recruitment Board on 16 June 2025

The draft minutes dated 16 June 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting subject to amendment.

3. 2025/28 Digital Services Strategy

David Robertson and Nicola Paton joined the meeting.

David Robertson provided a brief overview of the 2025/25 Digital Services Strategy, copies of which had been previously circulated.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Note Review and if appropriate approve the strategy, including its core principals, strategic objectives, framework, review process and budget provision.
- Review and if appropriate support a bid during the 2026/27 budget setting rounds for a £81,852 (inc. VAT) per annum increase in the annual revenue budget for a threat monitoring service and an improved booking and meeting system.
- Agree, subject to any required amendments, this report will be submitted to the Audit Scotland Board, with the addition of visual elements to enhance its readability, on 23 September 2025.

During discussion, Executive Team agreed the updated key deliverables set out in the strategy.

Further discussion, focused on the impact of AI to automate processes across the whole organisation within its current forms and ensuring we are conducting enough proactive research and testing. John noted a session at the recent CIPFA conference and will provide the key messages from it to DST.

Executive Team noted the resource plans but will await further proposals being brought to the Recruitment Board in due course for further discussion and approval.

Executive Team noted the duration of the strategy to align with the business plan, however, due to the past fast paced environment of Digital changes information to be included on additional internal and external reviews to ensure the strategy is still going in the right direction.

Following discussion, Executive Team approved the strategy subject to amendments for further consideration at the appropriate forum and agreed that the budget request will be considered within the budget and operational planning process.

Action: Nic to confirm if Board or Audit Committee is the correct forum for the strategy to be presented at.

4. Cyber Incident Response Plan Update

David Robertson provided a brief update on the Cyber Incident Response Plan (CIRP), copies of which had been previously circulated.

Executive Team was invited to:

- Review and as appropriate approve the CIRP June 2025 and its appendices.
- Note the new monthly update process.
- Note that this update and the associated Incident Management Team (IMT) and Cyber Incident Response Team (CIRT) cyber incident response exercises complete the outstanding CIRP internal audit recommendations.

During discussion, Executive Team acknowledged the CIR session held in June and the follow up actions reflected in this plan and approved the proposal to use Signal to communicate with colleagues for only during an incident ensuring security safety.

Executive Team also received assurance in stating the plan and associated documents are exempt under FOI.

Following discussion, Executive Team approved the CIRP, noted the new monthly update and completion of audit recommendations, as well as agreeing for a further planned CIR session with certain IMT members observing.

Action: David Robertson to arrange a further CIR session

David Robertson and Nicola Paton left the meeting.

5. Operational Planning Update

Gemma Diamond joined the meeting.

Gemma Diamond provided a verbal update on Operational Planning.

Following discussion, Executive Team noted the update and were reassured that all colleagues involved were clear of the roles and responsibilities to deliver the plan and budget as well as delivering to the timelines required.

Gemma Diamond left the meeting.

6. 2025 Wellbeing Survey

Susan Burgess and Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

Susan Burgess introduced the proposed approach to the 2025 Wellbeing Survey, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Agree the proposed approach to roll out our wellbeing survey for 2025, subject to any feedback during the meeting.
- Consider circulating the paper to the wider Leadership Group following Executive Team for their information.

During discussion, Executive Team noted that a further approval is coming to a future meeting on options to replace Best Companies and a plan for all wellbeing surveys.

Further discussion focused on the bullying and harassment questions within the survey. Executive Team requested clarification on how the figures in the survey responses are calculated and for additional questions to be included to define the time period of bullying and harassment experiences.

Following discussion, Executive Team agreed the approach to the wellbeing survey, subject to approval of additional questions.

Action: Susan to provide additional questions for approval

Susan Burgess and Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

7. Audit Quality Update

Jonny Steen, Paul O'Brien and Gill Miller joined the meeting.

Jonny Steen provided a introduced the Audit Quality Update, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the paper and ask any questions of clarification.

During discussion, Executive Team received an update on the current quality activity and improvement action plan, highlighting one outstanding action within PABV of the refreshed AMF which is now entering stakeholder engagement phase for feedback.

Following discussion, Executive Team thanked the team for their work, received assurance on the action plan items and noted the paper.

Jonny Steen, Paul O'Brien and Gill Miller left the meeting.

8. Draft Executive Team agenda: 28 July 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 28 July 2025. Executive Team also set a reminder that Accounts Commission requirements should be captured in the PSR Annual Statement item.

9. Executive Team Action Tracker

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the action tracker.

10. Any other business

Executive Team noted the update on a new payroll system contract with MHR and agreed for a more detailed proposal paper for approval.

John Cornett provided an update on the budget holders for the two cost centres within ASG in line with the Scheme of Delegation for approval .

Action: John to provide email by correspondence for final approval.

11. Review of the meeting

The Executive Team reflected on the discussions during the meeting.

12. Executive Team communications

Kirsty Gibbins joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reflected on the discussion during the meeting and agreed on the key highlights for internal communication of wellbeing, operational planning and the work by colleagues finalising the NHS audits.

Kirsty Gibbins left the meeting.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 28 July 2025 at 10.00, Edinburgh.

Minutes

Executive Team

Monday, 28 July 2025 at 10.00am

Audit Scotland offices, West Port, Edinburgh and MS Teams

Present

Vicki Bibby (Chair)
Helena Gray
Kenny Oliver
Niki Ross (Minutes)

Apologies:

Stephen Boyle
Alison Cumming
John Cornett
Fiona McKie

In attendance:

Graeme Forrester, Head of Performance and Corporate Governance
David Loudon, Human Resources Assistant Manager
Lee Ovens, Executive Assistant
Callum Aitken, Modern Apprentice Accounts Commission
Patrick McFall, Communications Adviser

1. Minutes of Executive Team meeting on 30 June 2025

The draft minutes dated 30 June 2025 were considered. The Executive Team agreed that these were an accurate record of the meeting.

Correspondence items

The Financial Performance Summary (May) and MHR contract was noted.

2. Internal Audit Procurement

Graeme Forrester joined the meeting.

Graeme Forrester provided a brief overview of the re-tender of internal audit services to Audit Scotland, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Discuss the proposed plan for procurement of internal audit services for Audit Scotland.

- Consider the proposed 70% quality: 30% price evaluation balance.
- Approve submission of proposed route (subject to Executive Team amendments) to the Audit Committee meeting on 2 September 2025.

During discussion, the Executive Team agreed that further work is needed to explore potential opportunities for a joint procurement exercise or a shared service arrangement with other public audit agencies across the UK. It was noted that Graeme is currently awaiting guidance from the Scottish Government's Procurement Team on whether either of these approaches are viable and, if so, the most appropriate way forward.

The Executive Team also discussed the 70% quality and 30% price weighting used in the internal audit evaluation process. It was agreed that further detail is required to understand the rationale behind this approach. Additionally, the team agreed it would be helpful to explore how other agencies apply similar evaluation criteria.

Further discussion was on lessons learned and how it would be useful to carry out an exercise on this to help shape and inform our future procurement approach.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed that further work is required and requested that a follow-up paper is brought back to them, setting out clear recommendations for consideration at the Audit Committee meeting on 2 September 2025. Subject to the Audit Committee's endorsement, the paper will then be submitted to the Audit Scotland Board for approval.

Action: Graeme will carry out further work and resubmit the paper to the Executive Team for further discussion and approval.

3. Legal Service Procurement

Graeme Forrester provided a brief overview on the options for re-tendering of legal services for Audit Scotland, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Discuss the options presented and consider the future arrangements for the provision of legal services to Audit Scotland from 1 April 2026.
- The Corporate Governance team recommends procuring a legal services framework (option set out below) and proposes to contract for three years with the option to extend by two years.
- Subject to Executive Team approval, the Corporate Governance team will finalise a tender specification in consultation with the Scottish Government Procurement Unit. The current draft is attached at Appendix 1.

During discussion, the Executive Team reviewed the legal services framework outlined in the paper and considered the rotational approach currently used for the provision of legal services. While acknowledging that the framework appears to function effectively, the team agreed that further clarification is needed on why this approach is considered the preferred option.

Further discussion was on Option 2 and the potential risks related to team capacity/cost as well as the level of appetite/capacity. It was agreed that a clearer understanding of these factors is needed to determine whether they could represent a potential risk.

The Executive Team reviewed the procurement document and discussed the potential value of including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). It was noted that additional work is required to assess whether there is scope to incorporate KPIs into the framework.

Following discussion, the Executive Team agreed that further work is needed and requested that the paper be resubmitted for approval.

Action: Graeme will carry out further work and resubmit the paper to the Executive Team for further discussion and approval.

4. Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 – Statements on Exercise of Public Functions

Graeme Forrester introduced the draft Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive team was invited to:

- Review the draft statements.
- Subject to any amendments, approve the statements for publication on the Audit Scotland website.

During discussion, the Executive Team noted that the Accounts Commission is identified as a listed body in the legislation and requested clarification on its position in relation to the statements.

Further discussion was on expenditure, particularly instances where activity was evident, but no associated costs were reported. The Executive Team have asked for additional clarification on these instances.

Following discussion, the Executive Team requested a further review of the report's contents and figures, with the revised version to be circulated by correspondence for approval.

Action: Graeme to provide the Executive Team with an update on the Accounts Commission's position in relation to the statements.

Action: Graeme to review the report's content and circulated it to the Executive Team by correspondence for approval.

Graeme Forrester left the meeting.

5. Driving for Business Policy

David Loudon joined the meeting.

David Loudon introduced Driving for Business Policy, copies of which had been previously circulated.

The Executive Team was invited to:

- Note the daily driving limit advised.
- Note the position of other audit agencies' provisions regarding driving compliance checks and the supply of first aid kits.
- Discuss any amendments to existing practices.
- Approve the changes proposed to the Driving for Business policy, attached at appendix one, and agree that the staff handbook can be updated accordingly.

During discussion, the Executive Team considered whether first aid kits should be provided to colleagues using their private vehicles for business travel. Given the complexities involved, therefore on balance the team agreed that Audit Scotland would not supply kits.

The Executive Team discussed the approach to annual driving compliance checks, noting the varied practices across other organisations. It was agreed to maintain our current process of annual checks, with clearer emphasis in the policy on the rationale—particularly around insurance and risk compliance.

Following discussion, the Executive Team requested that the policy be updated to reflect the agreed changes and circulated by correspondence for approval.

Action: David to update the policy and circulate it to the Executive Team by correspondence for approval.

David Loudon left the meeting.

6. Draft Accounts Commission agenda: 14 August 2025

Lee Ovens and Callum Aitken joined the meeting.

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Accounts Commission on 14 August 2025.

Action: Niki to circulate the final version of the Impact Report to the Executive Team before it is shared with Accounts Commission members.

Lee Ovens and Callum Aitken left the meeting.

7. Draft Executive Team agenda: 4 August 2025

The Executive Team reviewed and noted the proposed agenda for the meeting of the Executive Team on 4 August 2025.

8. Any other business

There was no other business.

9. Review of the meeting

Vicki Bibby emphasised the need for further discussion on the quality of reports presented to the Executive Team, to ensure they are equipped to make well-informed decisions.

Action: Vicki/Fiona to address the quality of reports presented to the Executive Team.

10. Executive Team communications

Patrick McFall joined the meeting.

The Executive Team agreed that due to the holiday season there would be no Executive Team communications weeks commencing 29 July and 4 August 2025.

Patrick McFall left the meeting.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Executive Team will take place on 4 August 2025 at 10.00, Edinburgh.