



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**Finance and Public Administration Committee**

David McGill  
Clerk/Chief Executive  
Scottish Parliament

By email

All correspondence c/o:  
Finance and Public  
Administration Committee Clerks  
Room T3.60  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Tel: 0131 348 5219  
Textphone: 0800 092 7100  
[FPA.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:FPA.committee@parliament.scot)

29 March 2023

Dear David

Thank you for your letter of 22 February 2023 in which you set out information requested by the Finance and Public Administration Committee during our evidence session with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) on 10 January 2023. The Committee recently considered your letter and agreed, in the first instance, to seek clarification in relation to a number of issues.

Firstly, the Committee would be keen to receive further information on the SPCB's decision to approve a significant increase in the budget for the Commissioner for Ethical Standards and Public Life in Scotland. Your letter states that a 'wider scope audit review' of the Commissioner's Office in 2021 "identified a number of issues including that the office was under-resourced, it lacked resilience, its future was not sustainable based on the resources available to it and its senior management team was at full capacity and carrying excess leave". We seek further details of how the number of 7.4 WTE staff members and average salary of these new staff at around £55,000 a year has been arrived at, particularly given the relatively low case numbers involved.

The Committee's interest is around how the decision to increase the Commissioner's budget based on these reasons accords with decisions on other public bodies' budgets who are facing the same or similar pressures but are not being increased

given the current financial limits. We therefore seek further insights regarding the rationale for the SPCB's decision.

Your letter also summarises the costs associated with the Building Environment Management System for 2023-24. However, during evidence, the Deputy Chief Executive offered to provide a "detailed breakdown" in response to the following request from the Deputy Convener: "Given that it is a four-year project and that half the amount will be spent in this coming year, it would be helpful to understand the split between the cost of the work that will be done, the cost of the software and the cost of the infrastructure". He also asked for details of the lifespan of the system. The Committee would therefore be grateful if this detailed breakdown could be provided both for 2023-24 and subsequent years as far as possible, along with confirmation of the project's expected lifespan.

During evidence, the SPCB raised concerns regarding the potential implications of proposals to increase the number of officeholders, including through Bills currently being proposed or considered by the Parliament. You may be aware that the Committee recently wrote to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee to highlight these concerns as part of our scrutiny of the Financial Memorandum on the Patient Safety Commissioner (Scotland) Bill. We have also agreed to approach our consideration of those future FMs proposing new commissioners in a similar way. More broadly, one option might be to include sunset clauses within legislation creating some Commissioners, should their workload be expected to decline as time progresses. The Committee therefore recognises that the concerns around this issue are not confined to financial matters and that clarification may be required on where responsibility lies for examining these implications further. We would therefore be keen to start discussing these matters with you and the SPCB at your earliest convenience.

Finally, the SPCB may be aware that the Committee recently launched a call for views in relation to the Scottish Government's programme for public service reform. In this context, we would therefore welcome details of the measures that the SPCB is putting in place to encourage officeholders to share services such as buildings and staffing, to avoid duplication of services.

We would welcome your response by 25 April 2023.

Yours sincerely

**Kenneth Gibson MSP**  
**Convener**  
**Finance and Public Administration Committee**