



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Finance and Public Administration Committee

Audrey Nicoll MSP
Convener
Criminal Justice Committee

13 November 2024

Dear Audrey

Scrutiny of SPCB supported bodies

As you are aware, the Finance and Public Administration Committee published the report of our inquiry into Scotland's Commissioner Landscape: A Strategic Approach on 16 September 2024.¹ A parliamentary debate on our findings and recommendations followed on 31 October.²

Further to my letter of 16 September, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for giving evidence to the Committee as part of our inquiry on 14 May 2024, and for your contribution during the Committee debate.

As you know, our report found that the current landscape is no longer fit for purpose and called for a moratorium on creating any new SPCB supported bodies, or expanding the remit of existing bodies, until a 'root and branch' review of the structure is carried out. We found that "overall accountability, budget-setting, and scrutiny mechanisms, as set out in legislation and procedures, require an overhaul to ensure they are clearer, more robust, joined-up, and transparent".

During evidence-taking, some Commissioners told us they would like more opportunities to give evidence to committees on their performance and it was also suggested that performance and budget scrutiny should be more closely linked. A significant number of witnesses told us that parliamentary scrutiny should be enhanced with a focus on delivery of outcomes.

In response to the evidence we heard, the Committee undertook to seek views from relevant committees on how supported bodies within committee remits fulfil their functions. This evidence will help inform our enhanced scrutiny of SPCB supported body budget bids as part of our scrutiny of the overall SPCB budget bid each year.

¹ [Report on Scotland's Commissioner Landscape: A Strategic Approach](#)

² [Meeting of the Parliament: 31/10/2024 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

Contact: Finance and Public Administration Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email FPA.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

We would therefore welcome your Committee's views on budget, spending and performance of the Scottish Biometrics Commissioner as informed by any scrutiny you have undertaken in the last year.

As part of your response, and given this is the first time we have sought such information, we also seek clarification, more generally, of any work your Committee has undertaken in relation to scrutiny of the officeholder's budget, annual accounts and strategic plan, as well as future plans for any such scrutiny. We anticipate that our evidence session with the SPCB will take place in January 2025. We would therefore welcome your response by the end of this year.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Kenneth Gibson MSP
Convener