



SPECIAL PUBLIC MEETING - STRATEGIC PLANNING AND CHANGE COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 16 APRIL 2026 @ 1430 HRS

VIRTUAL (MS TEAMS)

PRESENT:

Therese O'Donnell, Chair (TO'D)
Angiolina Foster (AF)
Paul Stollard (PS)

Tim Wright (TW)
Stuart Ballingall (SJB)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Andy Watt (AW)	Deputy Chief Officer
Sarah O'Donnell (SO'D)	Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services)
Mark McAteer (MMcA)	Director of Governance, Strategy and Change
Deborah Stanfield (DS)	Interim Director of Finance, Digital and Infrastructure
Curtis Montgomery (CM)	Head of Strategy and Change
Richard Whetton (RW)	Head of Governance and Compliance
Mhairi Wylie (MW)	Chair of SFRS Board
Christopher Casey (CC)	Board Support Manager
Heather Greig (HG)	Board Support Executive Officer
Margaret Kyle (MK)	Minutes

OBSERVERS:

None

1 CHAIR'S WELCOME

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to this Special Strategic Planning and Change Committee (SPCC) meeting and invited Board members to review and feedback upon firstly, Year 2 of the Three-Year Delivery Plan and then the 2027-28 Planning Schedule.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Heather Martin, Centre of Excellence Manager

3 CONSIDERATION OF AND DECISION ON ANY ITEMS TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE

3.1 There were no items identified.

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

4.1 There were no declarations of interest noted.

5 PLANNING/STRATEGY

5.1 Three Year Delivery Plan

5.1.1 MMcA presented the current draft of Year 2 of the Three-Year Strategic Delivery Plan explaining its development process ahead of submission to the Board for approval and reflected on a revised planning approach which had been introduced to better align strategy, change and financial planning. MMcA explained the initial priorities were

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developed through Heads of Function Workshops in October 2025 and subsequently reviewed following budget approval, with the paper reflecting post budget re-prioritisation, however, the detailed milestones, resources and dependencies were still being finalised through the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and would be included in the final Board paper.

- 5.1.2 The Committee sought clarification as to why the Year Two plan must go to the Board and whether it was for information or approval. MMcA and RW confirmed that the plan was subject to Board approval as it was integral to delivering the organisation's strategy and noted that this aligned with standard governance requirements. The Committee also inquired whether the nine priorities set out in the plan were listed in order of prioritisation. MMcA clarified that the prioritisation exercise had been conducted with Heads of Function using the "must do, could do, should do" approach. The final list was not ranked and currently all nine actions were of equal importance to the Service for the year ahead.
- 5.1.3 In respect of the development and evolution of the Delivery Plan, MMcA explained it was developed through new integrated processes involving service planning, change and financial planning, with Heads of Function considering resourcing and interdependencies. The process included workshops, amendments and alignment with budget outcomes, resulting in a prioritised but evolving draft.
- 5.1.4 The Committee concerns focussed on the nine strategic priorities within Appendix A, the lack of prioritisation, resource allocation, budget, interdependencies, timelines, milestones, integration and Service Delivery Review (SDR) impact. The Committee held the view that the plan read as a list rather than an actionable plan and stressed that the final Board paper must link planning, change and finance and set out clear dates, durations and resource requirements. The Committee also questioned its own role in scrutinising the draft plan and agreed that, as presented, this paper could only be noted, not properly scrutinised or approved until tabled at Board for approval.
- 5.1.5 MMcA acknowledged these gaps and committed to providing a final version with milestones, resource requirements and clearer links to strategy and finance.
ACTION: MMcA
- 5.1.6 MMcA, AW and DS offered reassurance to the Committee by explaining that the plan was a "live" document and that the final version would address the above issues when the Year 2 Plan was presented at the Board meeting on 30 April 2026.
- 5.1.7 The Committee discussed the implications of SDR decisions and budget constraints on the delivery plan, clarifying that while SDR outcomes were significant, the current plan was designed to be flexible and already accounted for known financial limitations.
- 5.1.8 AW commented on the timing of SDR decisions, noting that while SDR was important, most actions in the plan were expected to proceed regardless, with only minor adjustments anticipated post SDR. AW emphasised that the plan covers a five-year period and was structured to accommodate future Board decisions.
- 5.1.9 MMcA and AW explained the plan reflected the outcome of recent budget negotiations, with some initiatives being deferred due to resource limitations. DS confirmed all actions within the plan were funded within the 2026-27 budget, and that the plan would be updated to show how budget reductions had shaped priorities.
- 5.1.10 The Committee noted that Appendix A was out of date and did not support meaningful scrutiny, as they were unable to assess alignment between the Strategy, the action plan and the budget. The Committee further noted that, in the absence of current and sufficiently detailed information, they could only note the paper rather than scrutinise it and suggested that this limitation be formally recorded in the meeting outcome.

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- 5.1.11 DS advised that Finance had worked closely with Strategic Planning and that the breakdown and approved budget amounts to fund these planned activities exist. DS acknowledged that the Appendix needed to be updated and better linked to the main paper. DS committed to ensuring the information was appropriately detailed for the Board paper in April.
- 5.1.12 The Committee sought assurance that this paper would be fully formed for Board approval, including narrative on SDR, explicit acknowledgement of budget uncertainties, prioritisation, timelines, and resource details. MMcA and DS confirmed these elements would be included within the final Board paper and the Committee agreed on a more robust and actionable plan.
ACTION: MMcA/DS
- 5.1.13 The Committee requested the inclusion of paragraphs within the Board paper addressing the implications of SDR and the uncertainty of future budget settlements and explicitly stating the uncertainty of future budget settlements with Scottish Government.
ACTION: MMcA
- 5.1.14 MMcA outlined the revised planning process for 2027-28 would start earlier to allow more time for budget and strategic alignment, with workshops and gap analysis scheduled.
- 5.1.15 The Committee raised concerns about the lengthy, layered process, suggesting that it should be streamlined and more efficient to avoid delays to ensure it remains relevant in a dynamic environment.
- 5.1.16 There was consensus to review and simplify the Planning Schedule, condense timelines, and ensure Committee meetings align with planning needs to avoid unnecessary delays.
ACTION: MMcA
- 5.1.17 DS explained the elongated timeline this year was due to the late budget announcement and significant re-work required. DS emphasised that planning and alignment across strategic planning, finance and change was underway, and that future iterations would be quicker and more efficient, with efforts to co-ordinate Committee meeting timings to avoid unnecessary delays. DS agreed to follow up with Scottish Government for indicative dates for budget submissions to better align planning timelines.
ACTION: DS
- 5.1.18 The Committee acknowledged DS's point and added that the 2027–28 Planning Schedule should be condensed to be more concise, dynamic and less time-consuming, incorporating lessons learned and adjusting Committee meeting timings to avoid delay, with close co-ordination between Committee Support and Governance, Strategy and Change teams.
- 5.1.9 **The Committee noted the report.**

6 REVIEW OF ACTIONS

- 6.1 Three formal actions were recorded during the meeting.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING.

- 7.1 The next full public Committee meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday 14 May 2026.
- 7.2 There being no further matters to discuss, this Special Public meeting closed at 1510 hrs.