

## ARC Meeting Minutes

15 June 2026, Bridgeside House

### Present

- Joe Al-Gharabally (JAG) Chair, Independent Member (SPCB AAB)
- Claire Methven O'Brien (COB) Member, Scottish Human Rights Commission
- Shelley Gray (SG) Member, Scottish Human Rights Commission

### In attendance

- Jan Savage (JS) Executive Director
- David Lees (DL) Head of Commission Secretariat and Business Support
- Neil Maclean (NM) Audit Manager, Audit Scotland
- Scott McCready (SMC) WBG (via Teams)
- Aaliya Seyal (AS) Member, Scottish Human Rights Commission (item 10 only)
- Rosemary Agnew (RA) Member, Scottish Human Rights Commission (item 10 only)
- Tiia Kontro (TK) Business Support Officer, Minute Secretary

### Apologies

- Siobhan White (SW) Independent Member (SPC AAB)

### List of acronyms

- ARC: Audit and Risk Committee
- GAHNRI: Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions
- SHRC: Scottish Human Rights Commission
- SLT: Senior Leadership Team
- SPCB: Scottish Parliament Corporate Body

## 1. Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed the Committee and attendees.

No apologies were noted.

## 2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interests were shared in relation to any of the agenda items.

## 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

### 3.1. Minutes of the meeting on 16 March 2026

The minutes of the previous meeting were tabled. The Chair highlighted that draft minutes had not been approved by the Chair prior to their issue with the papers for the meeting and could not be formally approved at this stage. Minor changes were noted and the minute will be amended and shared with the Chair via correspondence for final approval.

It was agreed that all future draft minutes will be shared with the Chair before tabling at the ARC meeting.

**Action 1: Draft minutes to be shared with the Chair for final approval after the meeting within the approved timeframe.**

### 3.2. Rolling Action Log

The Action log was reviewed and an update shared on key points.

The Chair requested that the Risk Workshop be scheduled ahead of the next ARC meeting in September.

**Action 2: Risk Workshop to be scheduled before meeting in September 2026.**

Chair requested that closed actions be kept visible on the Action Log for clarity.

**Action 3: Action Log issued to ARC meetings to include details of closed actions.**

## 4. Executive Director's Report

### 4.1. Significant business or performance matters

The Executive Director's report was tabled and discussed. The following specific points were noted.

ARC formally noted congratulations to the SHRC for maintaining its A status following reaccreditation from GANHRI's Sub Committee on Accreditation (SCA). The award reflects recognition of SHRC's full compliance with international standards including the Paris Principles and allows SHRC speaking rights at UN bodies.

The Executive Director offered assurance that the SHRC has continued to deliver outputs in the pre-election period despite internal capacity pressures, which have been communicated to ARC. Appropriate mitigations are in place to ensure risks are managed and monitored.

A concern was raised regarding late issuing of papers for the Commission meeting on 1 June, which was highlighted in the Report due to capacity pressures and public holidays. This was noted by the Chair.

The potential risk arising from the changes within the scrutiny and reporting structures of the Scottish Parliamentary committees following the election were discussed. It was agreed that consideration be given to adding a short-term risk to the Risk Register to reflect this.

**Action 4: Risk regarding Scottish Parliament scrutiny structures to be considered and added to the Risk Register as appropriate.**

The Chair noted that resourcing the management of the Commission's confidential single issue is having a significant impact on SLT and Business Support capacity. The Chair suggested assessing this in terms of FTE hours for impact reporting and to demonstrate resource requirements for any future additional funding requests.

**Action 5: Capacity required for Single Issue Committee to be noted in an FTE format.**

A question was raised regarding the formatting and focus of the Executive Director's report specifically to ensure that best value is obtained from the reporting structure for the purposes of ARC, as distinct from the report submitted by the Executive Director to the Commission meetings. The Chair noted that he considered the current structure and level of information provided in the paper to be appropriate for ARC.

## 5. Corporate Services Report

### 5.1. Finance and Corporate Services Report

The Finance and Corporate Services Report was tabled. The following specific points were discussed.

2025-26-year end accounts are currently being reviewed, and report is anticipated to be available for Audit Scotland in July 2026.

The funding regarding ongoing and increasing levels of litigation work was discussed. It was noted that there is a maximum provision for £25k worth of Litigation/Counsel fees within SHRC's approved annual budget which will not be adequate to support SHRC's strategic plans to increase intervention activity in line with the mandate. Additional funding is provided by request to SPCB for contingency provision, but it was agreed this is not sustainable going forward. The Chair advised that confirmation in writing be sought from SPCB on the commitment to funding SHRC's litigation costs in the medium term.

**Action 6: Write to SPCB form confirmation in writing of funding commitment to SHRC's litigation costs.**

**Action 7: Produce paper for ARC outlining a medium-term projection for litigation budget for the SHRC, based on actuals thus far, to inform 2027-28 budget.**

Chair noted the absence of Cyber Security incidents as a positive and suggested considering amending the risk accordingly on the Risk Register to reflect successful mitigation.

**Action 8: Risk Register to be amended regarding Cyber Security attacks to reflect likelihood assessment.**

## 6. Annual Audit Plan

### 6.1. External Audit

NM has reviewed the materials, and it was noted the anticipated clearance date will be early September 2026.

### 6.2. Internal Audit - WBG Governance Review Progress Report

WBG Internal Audit 2025/26 Review of Progress Against Governance Review Implementation Plan was tabled and noted by the Committee.

ARC noted the assessed 'Strong' Assurance rating following the audit and the current work programme to complete outstanding actions by the end of June 2026. A suggestion was put forward to include closed actions in the audit report in the similar manner to previous discussions regarding Actions Log.

### 6.3. WBG Annual Internal Audit Report

WBG Annual Internal Audit Report was tabled and the 'Strong' assurance rating noted by ARC with three low level recommendations, two of which are partially implemented.

### 6.4. Revised Internal Audit Plan

The revised Internal Audit Plan was tabled by WBG to include Shared Services and Payroll as agreed. This was noted by ARC.

## 7. People and Culture Update

People and Culture report paper was tabled and noted by the Committee. The following additional points were discussed.

A question was raised regarding the capacity in relation parliamentary and public affairs, which has been identified as a skills gap in the team. It was noted that the current interim resource plan does not resolve the gap as hoped. This is as a result of the internal redeployment not being successful into the central Commission Business Coordinator role, requiring this to be the primary focus of external temporary recruitment instead of public affairs. It was noted that whilst this

recruitment takes place, there is agreement to repurpose existing team resources to provide central coordination support in the short term. The longer-term requirements for parliamentary and public affairs monitoring will be factored into Phase 2 of the People and Culture programme, which will focus on organisational design.

The Committee discussed the interim resourcing plan and the practical arrangements of this. It was noted that due to unforeseen capacity pressures and, the limits on what we have been able to achieve with the temporary redeployment of existing staff members, the plan has not yet been fully implemented. In the short term, some additional support is in place for members and a recruitment process commencing in July will consolidate this further. It was acknowledged that this is a priority for Phase 2.

It was agreed that the Committee will receive more detail of the programme for phase 2 of the People and Culture programme by the next ARC. It was recognised that next steps will involve direct discussion with staff on structure and roles which can impact on employee wellbeing which is recognised in terms of risk. This will be factored into the planning process, in partnership with the trade unions, and a focussed comms plan and support processes will be integral to this phase of the programme.

The Executive Director noted that there is risk to delivery as a result of capacity pressures on the Head of Business Support and Commission Secretariat, and that this will be kept under close review in the coming weeks. The priority will remain the conclusion of Phase 1, through the conclusion of the review of employee policies and Handbook.

## 8. Risk Management

The Risk Register Review paper was tabled and noted by the Committee.

The Chair raised a question on the mitigating actions noted against Risk 1 may not be accurate taking into account the ongoing capacity constraints and requested the risk to be updated.

**Action 9: Risk one and associated mitigating actions to be updated to reflect the current circumstances accurately.**

## 9. AOB

The date of the next ARC meeting will be rescheduled due to Chair availability.

**Action 10: New date for September 2026 ARC meeting to be determined and circulated in due course.**

Members of the Commission left the meeting.

## **10. Accountable Officer Update (closed session)**

Following conclusion of the ARC meeting, a short, closed session was convened by the ED to notify Audit Scotland (External Audit) of the confidential issue being managed by SHRC.

Following this, Audit Scotland left and the Commission Single Issue Committee members attended to provide a factual briefing to the Chair of ARC on the single issue, with particular reference to risk. No minutes were recorded.

ENDS.