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Operational Plan: 2010/11

Our Operational Plan 2009/10 sets out the activities which will be undertaken during the year to continue progress towards the achievement of the objectives identified in our Strategic Plan 2008-12. In addition to these specific activities, the core activities undertaken by the three functional areas of the Office (Enforcement, Policy & Information, and Operational Management) are detailed.

We will continue to streamline our investigative and decision approval processes with a view to reducing still further the time taken to close cases and to improve throughput of decisions. A significant feature of the enforcement plan is the number of practice assessments of authorities we will conduct. Our pilot assessments showed that this informal audit of public authority compliance with FOI and EIRs generally allowed us to identify improvements which authorities could make and also good practice which we could recommend to comparable bodies.

Our Information work focuses on developing our website which has become a central resource for advice, guidance, and news as well as being a searchable database of our decisions. We will continue to build links with users and to research issues which influence take up of FOI rights. Our Policy work will be focussed on the expected designation of a range of bodies under FOISA.

Operationally we will continue to operate an efficient organisation. We face the challenge of all public authorities in identifying expenditure savings whilst managing a projected increase in cases. We will work with the SPCB and other Commissioners/ Ombudsman to seek innovative solutions.

Kevin Dunion
Scottish Information Commissioner



Strategic Aim 1: Case Closures – Length of Investigations

Investigative capacity will be used to significantly reduce the journey time to closure.

	Objectives	Activities	Measurement	Timescale
a	Continue to improve service to applicants by further reducing the time taken to investigate and close cases	For applications for decision validated on or after 1 April 2008: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• case closure average of 5 months	Data from investigations database	Monthly



Strategic Aim 2: Compliance

Investigate the practice of public authorities and identify measures to improve compliance with the Act and Codes of Practice.

	Objectives	Activities	Measurement	Timescale
a	Promote public authority compliance with FOISA and the EIRs	Establish and train new Assessment Team	Training takes place	Jun 2010
		Carry out 12 good practice assessments of public authorities and issue 12 voluntary action plans	Assessments completed and reports published	In line with plan agreed on 21 Apr 2010



Strategic Aim 3: Awareness

Target specific sectors of society to ensure that they are aware of their rights and the potential to use FOISA / the EIRs

	Objectives	Activities	Measurement	Timescale
a	Increase awareness and use of FOI rights by civil society organisations	<i>Through The Civil Society Research Project: a three year joint research study with the University of Strathclyde:</i>		
		Make presentations to voluntary and community organisations, including event at the Festival of Politics	Minimum of 6 presentations made	Ongoing to March 11
		Publish second phase research findings report	Report published	Dec 10
		Promote the civil society research findings to SCVO and other representative organisations for the voluntary sector	High level meeting – SIC & SCVO	March 11
		Run two pilot outreach roadshows – to promote awareness of FOI and of the SIC in local areas.	Good participation and positive feedback	Nov10
b	Support Consumer Focus to gain an understanding of consumers' use of FOI, including any barriers to making information requests	Inform the development of Consumer Focus Scotland's research proposal to investigate the impact of FOISA on consumers and provide advice on FOI matters throughout the life of the project.	Design brief agreed with SIC	TBA



Strategic Aim 4: Practice

Build knowledge of and promote good practice by authorities and applicants through research, publication scheme approval and a reference group of key specialists.

	Objectives	Activities	Measurement	Timescale
a	Implement the recommendations of the 2010/11 web survey and develop a proposal for social media	Develop a proposal for a social media programme	Focus group participation rates and feedback	Aug 10
		Develop new website functionality and content e.g., dashboard, publication scheme section, media toolkit	Feedback from stakeholders Usage statistics	Ongoing to Mar 11
		Review website accessibility and report recommendations for action (links with Equality Strategy project)	Accessibility rating	Mar 11
b	Publish and promote the Commissioner's Annual Report 2010	Design and PR agencies appointed	Appointment per project timetable	Sep 10
		Content developed	Developed per project timetable	
		Report published, laid before Parliament and widely promoted	Press coverage / website activity	Mar 11
c	Develop revised approach to the scrutiny and approval of publication schemes	Stakeholder and public consultation	Number of consultation responses	Sep 10
		Pilot new approach	Compliance with notification process	May 11
		Review of pilot and publication of final guidance and scrutiny plans for 2011/12	Approval by SIC	Aug 11



Strategic Aim 5: Development

Identify beneficial changes to legislation, regulation and codes e.g., designation of additional authorities. Address areas of uncertainty regarding the application of the legislation

	Objectives	Activities	Measurement	Timescale
a	Secure designation under Section 5 of FOISA of the bodies named by the Minister in his December 2009 announcement, support newly designated bodies to prepare for implementation and ensure that designation is an ongoing activity in the future	Engage with bodies being considered to ensure that are well informed about the likely impact of FOISA on their organisations and to learn their views. Contribute SIC's views on the consultation to Government.	Contacts made with all bodies being considered	Apr 10 to Sep 11
		Once the designation orders are in place, provide support to the new bodies to prepare for implementation, including the development of publication schemes	Timescale for submission of publication schemes negotiated with SG FOI Unit Approved schemes in place according to agreed timescales	TBA
		Promote the importance of continual review of bodies by Government for future s5 orders		Ongoing



Strategic Aim 6: Reference

Publish detailed reference material bringing together our experience and approach in publications, drawing upon our interpretation of law, international comparisons, platform decisions, legal advice, Court cases and evidence of good and bad practice

Objectives		Activities	Measurement	Timescale
a	Produce and publish an extensive guide to FOISA and EIRs	Establish contract with Dundee University Press (DUP)	Concluded agreement	May 10
		Deliver content to DUP	SIC and DUP satisfied with standard of final text	May 11
		Publish Handbook	Launched and sponsored copies distributed to civil society organisations	Oct 11
b	Support the growth of the Centre for Freedom of Information	<i>In association with the Law School of the University of Dundee:</i>		
		Develop a formal partnership agreement with the University of Dundee	Publication of agreement	May 10
		Co-ordinate four seminars	Minimum of 50 participants at each seminar	Mar 11
c	Explore the possibility of an association for FOI professionals through the Centre	Develop proposal and discuss with stakeholder organisations	Report findings	Mar 11



Strategic Aim 7: Governance

Ensure SIC governance arrangements are robust and reflect best practice

	Objectives	Activities	Measurement	Timescale
a	<p>Review, and amend as appropriate, SIC's policies for compliance with the requirements of the Equalities Bill (and pursuant legislation).</p> <p>Stakeholders' accessibility to SIC and FOISA improved</p>	<p>Establish joint working group with Officeholders' representatives</p> <p>Stakeholder reference group established and consulted</p> <p>Practical improvements implemented and staff training undertaken</p> <p>Policies revised and follow-on action plan established</p>	<p>Collaborative approach agreed</p> <p>Participation of key representative organisations</p> <p>Implementation</p> <p>Policies externally reviewed for compliance with legislation</p>	<p>Aug 10</p> <p>Dec 10</p> <p>Feb 11</p> <p>Mar 11</p>
b	<p>Inform development of SPCC Bill, and develop effective working protocol with SPCB</p>	<p>Engage with Members during Stages 2 and 3 of the Bill's passage to seek amendments to better protect the functional independence of SIC</p> <p>Work in collaboration with the SPCB to develop an effective working protocol through which the requirements arising from the Bill can be implemented.</p>	<p>Amendments laid</p> <p>Framework agreement acceptable to SIC and SPCB implemented</p>	<p>Apr / May 10</p> <p>Mar 11</p>



Strategic Aim 8: Organisational Management

Develop and maintain arrangements to support achievement of organisational objectives

	Objectives	Activities	Measurement	Timescale
a	Comprehensive review of resources and strategic objectives in anticipation of reduction in resources 2011/12 – 2013/14	Participation in Officeholders' working group to consider opportunities for shared services and co-location, in collaboration with the Scottish Parliament	Per terms of reference, to be established	Mar 11
		Review of strategic and operational objectives in context of anticipated real terms reductions in budgets	Review conducted	Aug 10
		Develop detailed budget submission for 2011/12 and indicative budget submissions for 2012/13 and 2013/14	Budget approval	Aug 10
b	Develop ability to respond effectively to significant unplanned absences of key postholders	Report findings arising from Business Continuity Planning Project Phase 2	Significant staff absences identified together with gaps in procedures / training	Jul 10
		Appropriate procedures developed and training provided	Procedures and training reviewed by relevant HoD	Mar 11
c	ICT provision continues to support organisational objectives	Conduct full needs analysis and develop business case	Cross-functional review and analysis of business need	Jul 10
		Establish procurement strategy and secure funding from SPCB	Development of procurement strategy	Aug 10
		Procurement & Contracting	Procurement strategy implemented and	Dec 10



			supplier appointed	
		Detailed design development and specification	Developed by cross-functional working team working with the appointed supplier	Mar 11
		Installation and migration	Cross-functional working team working with the appointed supplier	2011/12
d	Ensuring development and implementation of effective Information Management systems and procedures	Complete Information Management Project	Project Completed	Jun 10



Strategic Aim 9: Human Resources

Continuously develop staff competence and terms and conditions of employment

	Objectives	Activities	Measurement	Timescale
a	Develop staff competence to support achievement of organisational objectives	Develop Learning and Development Plan	L&D plan approved by management team	Jun 10
		Identification and provision of CPD as appropriate	Staff undertake appropriate CPD	Ongoing
b	Ensure terms and conditions remain aligned with the Scottish Parliament's	Complete Employee Handbook Project	Handbook approved by management team &SPCB; communicated to staff	Jun 10



Enforcement: Core Activities

	Investigations management: Ensuring that all applications made to the Commissioner are dealt with effectively, that investigations are carried out efficiently and that good quality decisions are issued speedily
	Enforcement: Compliance with the Commissioner's Enforcement Strategy, including carrying out good practice assessments and taking enforcement action in line with the strategy; referring failure to comply with formal notices to the Court of Session and seeking warrants for entry and inspection in line
	Legal advice: Providing legal advice to the Commissioner and managing appeals made against decisions of the Commissioner to the courts
	Enquiries: Managing the enquiries function (for the public and public authorities) provided by the Commissioner

Policy and Information: Core Activities

	Publication schemes: ensuring that all Scottish public authorities have adopted a publication scheme which has the Commissioner's approval
	Media strategy: promoting regular, consistent and accurate reporting of FOI issues in the media
	Information resources: maintaining information resource materials about FOI, including the website and guides for the public and public authorities. Ensuring that our own organisation is well informed
	Research: a programme of research including civil society's use of FOI and the level of public awareness of their rights
	External relations: ensuring regular engagement with other organisations, including liaison with Parliament and Government, public representative groups, public authority groups, the Information Commissioner and the Keeper of the Records of Scotland
	Promoting the Commissioner's experience: supporting the annual Holyrood FOI Conference and the Centre for Freedom of Information, publishing Inform newsletter and the annual report.



Operational Management: Core Activities

	Budget: Development of annual submission to Scottish Parliament Corporate Body (SPCB) and monitoring of expenditure
	Sustainable Development: Implementation of our Environmental policy
	HR: Refinement and implementation of the Performance Management System; terms and conditions of employment; CPD
	Equality: Ensure compliance with equality duties; review policies and promote good practice
	Finance: Accounting function including preparation of monthly management accounts
	Policy & Procedures: Ongoing review and refinement of organisational policies and procedures
	Management Information: Provision of key performance indicator data
	External Audit: Preparation of statutory accounts for external audit including compliance with relevant legislation and SPFM
	Internal Audit: Development and implementation of Strategic Internal Audit Plan
	Information Management: Ensuring development and implementation of effective Information Management systems and procedures
	Administration: Office administration including PA function, IT and building management