



For discussion

Title: Collaboration with The Scottish Food Commission and Public Services Reform

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Purpose

This paper updates the Committee on collaboration between the Park Authority and the Scottish Food Commission (SFC), a new Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) established by Scottish Government (SG) within the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022.

The paper outlines the collaborative and shared services work being undertaken; presents the initial Memorandum of agreement established between the Park Authority and the SFC; and provides information on wider work being delivered by the Park Authority within the SG's Public Services Reform (PSR) agenda.

Recommendations

The Performance Committee is asked to:

- a) Consider the Park Authority's responses to the Scottish Government's Public Services Reform agenda.
- b) Consider the Park Authority's position in support of the development and operations of the Scottish Food Commission and highlight any strategic considerations from a board perspective.

Strategic context

1. The SFC has been set up as an NDPB by SG under the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022. The Commission aims to ensure that Scotland's food system supports social, environmental, and economic wellbeing, public health, and sustainable food production. Its primary role is to provide oversight, scrutiny, and recommendations regarding the implementation of Good Food Nation Plans developed by Scottish Ministers, local authorities, and health boards.



2. The Park Authority was approached by SFC early in 2026 with a request that we consider providing corporate support services. This contact was on the basis of prior successful support provision to the Scottish Land Commission (SLC). The original request was for support with organisational set up, recruitment, Human Resource Management support and payroll. This request has now been extended to cover pensions administration, accountancy and financial reporting, information management and governance support.
3. The Memorandum of Agreement initiating this relationship between the Park Authority and the SFC is set out at Annex 1 to this paper.

Strategic policy consideration

4. The collaboration demonstrates a relatively novel approach to the SG's PSR agenda, through which public bodies are charged with seeking greater efficiencies, including rationalising corporate functions.
5. Our initial estimate is for 0.55 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff deployment over the course of 2026/27 in support of SFC during the initial set up phase, at a service charge of around £46,000. This balance of staff and costs will adapt as SFC moves from set up phase into delivery phase. This represents a significant contribution toward the Park Authority's adaptation of our corporate functions within the wider PSR expectations of government. It is likely the full quantum of savings made to public finances is much higher than the quoted service charge, given the significant one-off and other fixed costs which the SFC would have to incur were its own services provisions set up within the organisation.
6. The SFC will adopt in full the Park Authority's HR policy suite and our job evaluation and payroll structures. We are also replicating our payroll, pensions and financial processing arrangements for the Commission, and will provide appropriate information management and governance structures. As far as we are aware, this represents an innovative approach to shared services provision: an existing NDPB taking up the corporate support in setting up and operating a new organisation, leaving that organisation focused on recruitment of delivery and service focused staff.



7. The Park Authority is also involved in delivering wider PSR demonstrations via a project trialling new approaches to place-based solutions in the context of a single, overarching policy objective of climate resilience. The project proposes a three-year trial, in two pioneer catchments, which radically simplifies the environmental public service delivery system and structures.
8. The trial, if approved by Ministers, would build on work in the two catchments and develop an integrated relational approach that will require organisations to adapt existing operational approaches within the catchments. It aims to retain the strength in top-down leadership in policy intent and public resource allocation aligned behind the lead policy objective and shared drivers of climate resilience; and adopt a place-based delivery model to co-ordinate funding, regulation, governance and community involvement, ensuring efforts are grounded in local needs and contexts.
9. Two catchments have been selected to be part of the project, the Dee and the South Esk. The Park Authority provides overall project sponsorship in Scottish Government and is the strategic lead for the Dee catchment, incorporating previous work with the Dee Resilience Group into PSR governance and objectives.

Strategic risk management

10. The following strategic risks are in part mitigated through this work.
 - a) Availability of sufficient finance to deliver our corporate plan objectives (Risk 1).
 - b) Management of reputation and preventing reputational damage (Risk 11).
 - c) That the Park Authority does not adequately respond or adapt to changes in funding or policy environment at Scottish Government policy levels (Risk 13).
11. There are no new strategic risks suggested by the current status of the work covered here.

Implications

12. Senior managers are mindful that the Park Authority's corporate teams were designed on the basis of existing workloads. The implementation of these shared services arrangements will ultimately add around 10% to the levels of staffing



supported by our teams in HR and payroll. Other consequences in terms of financial support, information management and governance remain to be assessed. Where possible, work will be absorbed within existing team structures. Pressures on these teams and the potential need for interim additional support will continue to be monitored as the arrangements evolve.

Success measures

13. Success measures of these arrangements will link to the extent to which successful support is delivered, as assessed through regular feedback between the SFC and the Park Authority. The extent to which additional workflows can be absorbed within our current staffing levels will also represent a performance measure on the shared service relationships.

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