

Public Service

Ombudsman

Public Service Ombudsman Governance Framework May 2026

Date	Authorisation	New Paragraph	Change
12/12/2019	Board	NA	Accounting officer – contingency arrangements Board & Committee Standing Orders & Terms of Reference updated Delegation scheme – clarified Expert Advisory Panel Terms of Reference added
17/12/2020	Board ARAC	NA	Amended to reflect revised senior structure; Board & Committee Standing Orders & Terms of Reference updated.
16/12/2021	Board	NA	Amended to reflect the integration of the Assurance Table with the Strategic Risk Register; development of Terms of Reference for Board member involvement in projects; Board & Committee Standing Orders & Terms of Reference updated.
15/03/2022	Board	NA	Amended to clarify Ombudsman's role in appointing Board members Expert Advisory Panel Terms of Reference updated
01/11/2022	N/A	Section A, para 3	Minor amendments to formatting for consistency, and to change reference from 'Her Majesty' to 'His Majesty' at 1.1.2
14/12/2022	Board	NA	Minor amendments to reflect updated processes. Amended Committee terms of reference for consistency. References to Senior Independent Director changed to Senior Independent Member

30/01/2023	N/A	Section A, para 9	1.2.2.1 updated to reflect current job titles.
27/09/2023	Board	NA	2.18.7.1 Quality Committee quorum reduced from three to two
13/12/2023	Board	Section A, para 15	1.2.4.1 'Managing Public Money' (HM Treasury) re-published May 2023
		Section B, para 44	2.10.3 review of committee terms of reference amended from annually to biennially
		Section C, para 28	2.15.9.2 review of Board Standing Orders and Terms of Reference amended from annually to biennially
		NA	2.19 Inclusion and Wellbeing Committee Terms of Reference added
		NA	2.20.4.1 review of Board member Involvement in Projects Terms of Reference amended from annually to biennially
15/04/2024	Board	Section E, para 22	2.16.8.1 Audit and Risk Assurance Committee quorum reduced from three to two
		Section F, paras 18 and 23	2.17.6.1; 2.17.8.1 Remuneration and Nominations Committee membership reduced from four to three and quorum reduced from three to two.
05/07/2024	Board	Section A, para 3	1.1.2 All references to the Permanent Ombudsman include the Acting Ombudsman where relevant

		Section A, paras 7 onwards	1.2.1 Reduction from two to one Deputy Ombudsman
		Section A, paras 13 & 25	1.2.3.3; 1.4 'Chief Executive Officer' defined as 'CEO' with references thereafter shortened; all references to the CEO include the Interim CEO where relevant
		Section B, para 2	2.1.1 Removed reference to Chief Operating Officer
		Section B, para 36	2.8.5 Replaced reference to Chief Operating Officer with 'an Executive Board member'
		Section C, para 23	2.15.7.2 'Chief Operating Officer' defined as 'COO' with references thereafter shortened
		Section E, para 24	2.16.9.1 Removed reference to Chief Operating Officer
		NA	2.18.8.1 Quality Committee attendees updated
		NA	2.19.8.1 Inclusion and Wellbeing Committee attendees updated
		NA	2.20 Expert Advisory Panel ToR updated
11/12/2024	Board	Section G, para 31	3.11 Fit and Proper Policy updated to reference 'Process' instead
		Section D	Addition of Strategic Delivery ToR (2.16); Removal of Quality Committee ToR; Removal of Inclusion and Wellbeing Committee ToR

1/5/2025	NA	Section B, para 42	2.10.1; 5.3.7 References to Quality Committee removed and replaced with Strategic Delivery Committee
10/9/2025	ARAC	NA	All references to the Chief Operating Officer have been removed.
		Section C, para 23	2.15.7.2 Amended to include the Director of Operations Legal and Clinical as an executive member of the Board.
		Section F, para 8	2.18.2.5. Amended to include Remuneration and Nomination Committee's responsibility to review annual Remuneration and Staffing Report
		Section D, para 27	2.17.9.1 Director of Strategy and Resources added to list of Audit and Risk Assurance Committee attendees
		NA	2.19 Remove Terms of Reference for Expert Advisory Panel
		Section G, para 1 onwards	3.1 Updated to reflect most recent version of the Values and Behaviours Framework
		Section G, para 4	3.2.1 Updated to refer and link to current version of Cabinet Office Code of Conduct for Board members of Public Bodies
		Section G, para 5	3.2.2 Updated list of topics included in Cabinet Office Code
		NA	3.6 Remove paragraph relating to obsolete form "General Notice of Interests to be Registered"

		Section H, para 13	4.4.3 Table amended to replace Quality Committee with Strategic Delivery Committee; Directorate Assurance Meetings added
		NA	4.5.1 Assurance Arrangements table removed - outdated and duplicates table at 4.4.3
		NA	4.6.6 Senior Leadership Team removed from list of sources of assurance;
		NA	4.7 Outdated section deleted.
6/5/2026	ARAC	Section B, paras 3 & 4	2.1.2 and 2.1.3 Amended to include 'Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff.
		Section B, para 5	2.1.4 remove 'All changes must be approved by the Board' replace with 'Updated copies must be made available to the Board and the whole organisation'.
		Section B, para 8	2.2.2 remove 'including accommodation of the members of staff'.
		Section B, para 13	2.3.1. Remove 'A start time will be included in the agenda'
		Section C, para 4	2.15.2.1 Remove second bullet point 'Development if the organisation to deliver its strategic aims' and replace with 'Execution and impact of the strategy'. Fourth bullet point remove 'service' quality and replace with 'customer experience'.
		Section C, para 9	2.15.3.1 Amend to read 'The Board will meet at least five times per year for general business.

		Section C, para 19	2.15.6.4 Replace 'Chair' with 'Ombudsman'
		Section C, para 22	2.15.7.1 Remove 'Non-executive members will be appointed, on the recommendation of the Remuneration and Nominations Committee, for a term of no more than three years, renewable for one further term only'.
		NA	2.15.7.3 Remove paragraph.
		Section D, para 22 Section E, para 24	2.16.8.1 and 2.17.9.1 Include 'Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff' and Head of Governance and Risk'
		Section E, para 3	2.17.1.2 Remove 'Board'
		Section E, para 5	2.17.2.1 Remove 'the adequacy of sustainability targets'.
		Section F, paras 2 & 6	2.18.1.1 and 2.18.2.2 To include 'the Directors'.
		NA	2.18.2.4 Remove paragraph.
		NA	2.20 Remove section 'Board members involved in projects Terms of Reference'.
		Section G, paras 8, 10, 12, 25, 32, 33 Section J, paras 4 & 8	3.3.1, 3.3.3, 3.4.1, 3.8.1, 3.11.1, 3.11.2, 6.1.3, 6.2.2 Include Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff.
		Section G, para 9	3.3.2 Replace 'HR' with 'People and Talent'

		NA	Governance Framework replace 'Quality Committee' with Strategic Delivery Committee
		NA	4.6.6 Remove paragraph
		Section I, para 20	5.3.1 Include 'strategic risk and governance, strategy execution'.
		NA	5.3.7 Remove paragraph
		Section I, para 37	5.5.1 Include 'The responsibility to support any Board member recruitment and selection process.'
		NA	5.5.2 Remove paragraph
		Section J, para 9	6.2.3 Include 'objectives for the year ahead and'
01/09/2029		Full document	Wholesale changes made throughout all sections of the document as part of renaming project. All references to "PHSO" and "Parliamentary and Health Service" replaced with appropriate text in line with new name. Changes relate solely to nomenclature, no change to the substantive meaning or structure of the document.

Governance Framework

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Responsibility for the maintenance of this document lies with the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff.

Date of Approval by the Board 17 September 2025 and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 6 May 2026. Updated sections are as indicated in the authorisation table above.

SECTION A - Legal framework and operating context

A1. **Statutory Framework**

- A2. **The Parliamentary Ombudsman** (or Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration) draws powers from the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967, as since amended. **The Health Service Commissioner (or Health Service Ombudsman)** for England draws powers from the Health Service Commissioners Act 1993. These two roles are combined in the Public Service Ombudsman. In law, Public Service Ombudsman is a corporation sole with personal jurisdiction. This is not consistent with modern requirements of good governance, so the Ombudsman has appointed a unitary Board to strengthen the governance of the organisation.
- A3. The Ombudsman is appointed by His Majesty, for a fixed term not exceeding seven years. In the absence of a Permanent Ombudsman, an Acting Ombudsman may be appointed by His Majesty, for a fixed term not exceeding 12 months. An Acting Ombudsman draws the same powers as a Permanent Ombudsman from the Acts of Parliament described at paragraph 2 above. Therefore, all references to 'the Ombudsman' within this document may apply to either a Permanent or Acting Ombudsman.
- A4. The Ombudsman is answerable to Parliament and the Parliamentary and Constitutional Affairs Committee. Legislation sets out the basis of appointment; the remuneration arrangements; the appointment of officers in support, and that the Ombudsman has the power to conduct investigations, produce reports and to lay these before Parliament. There is substantial discretion vested in the role.
- A5. The Ombudsman is accountable to Parliament as **Accounting Officer** for the stewardship of resources. The Ombudsman discharges this accountability through assurance from the Chief Executive Officer (the Accountable Officer) and Executive Team, and through Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee assurance and challenge. The Ombudsman is also responsible for the sound governance and effective internal control of the organisation.
- ### A6. **Role of the Public Service Ombudsman**
- A7. The Ombudsman performs three roles:
- ### A8. **Ombudsman**
- A9. The Ombudsman has statutory responsibility for final decisions on individual parliamentary and health service cases. The Ombudsman acts personally where we identify significant or repeated mistakes that may have system-wide relevance. To ensure that this extensive casework is managed within a defined system of appropriate oversight, the Ombudsman has a scheme of delegated authority and has

appointed two Deputy Ombudsman: the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive.

A10. **Chair of Board**

- A11. As Chair of the Board, the Ombudsman can call upon a range of independent expertise from both external, independent non-executives with appropriate skills and from a team of qualified and experienced executive officers.
- A12. As the Chair of the Board, the Ombudsman promotes collective decision-making, but reserves the right, given the statutory requirements of the role, to depart from the Board's decisions but only as a last resort and with a commitment to put any reasons in writing.
- A13. The Chair will conduct annual development reviews for non-executive members and the annual review of the performance of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

A14. **Accounting Officer**

- A15. As set out in 'Managing Public Money' (HM Treasury, 2023) the Accounting Officer is the person who Parliament calls to account for stewardship of its resources. The Accounting Officer should ensure that the organisation operates effectively and to a high standard of probity. We are not obliged to adhere to 'Managing Public Money'. However, as this represents best practice, we choose to comply with the principles of 'Managing Public Money' insofar as they are relevant.
- A16. Under 'Managing Public Money', the organisation should:
- A17. Governance
- have a governance structure which transmits, delegates, implements and enforces decisions
 - have trustworthy internal controls to safeguard, channel and record resources as intended
 - work cooperatively with partners in the public interest
 - operate with propriety and regularity in all its transactions
 - treat its customers and business counterparties fairly, honestly and with integrity
 - offer appropriate redress for failure to meet agreed customer standards
 - give timely, transparent and realistic accounts of its business and decisions, underpinning public confidence.

A18. Decision-making

- make all its decisions in line with the strategy, aims and objectives of the organisation and/or in legislation
- take a balanced view of the organisation's approach to managing opportunity and risk
- impose no more than proportionate and defensible burdens on business.

A19. Financial management

- use its resources efficiently, economically and effectively, avoiding waste and extravagance
- plan to use its resources on an affordable and sustainable path, within agreed limits
- carry out procurement and project appraisal objectively and fairly, using cost benefit analysis and generally seeking good value for the Exchequer as a whole.
- use management information systems to gain assurance about value for money and the quality of delivery and so make timely adjustments
- avoid over defining detail and imposing undue compliance costs, either internally or on its customers and stakeholders
- have practical documented arrangements for controlling or working in partnership with other organisations, as appropriate
- use internal and external audit to improve its internal controls and performance.

A20. In particular, the Accounting Officer must personally sign:

- the accounts;
- the annual report;
- the governance statement;
- and having been satisfied that they have been properly prepared to reflect the business of the organisation, must personally approve:
- voted budget limits; and
- the associated Estimates Memorandum.

A21. There are several other areas where the Accounting Officer should take personal responsibility:

- regularity and propriety, including securing Treasury approval for any expenditure outside the normal delegations or outside the subheads of Estimates;

- affordability and sustainability: respecting agreed budgets and avoiding unaffordable longer-term commitments, taking a proportionate view about other demands for resources;
- value for money: ensuring that the organisation's procurement, projects and processes are systematically evaluated to provide confidence about suitability, effectiveness, prudence, quality, good value judged for the Exchequer as a whole, not just for the accounting officer's organisation;
- management of opportunity and risk to achieve the right balance commensurate with the institution's business and risk appetite;
- learning from experience, both using internal feedback and from right across the public sector;
- accounting accurately for the organisation's financial position and transactions, to ensure that its published financial information is transparent and up to date; and that the organisation's efficiency in the use of resources is tracked and recorded.

A22. Should the Accounting Officer be unavailable for a prolonged period of time, in accordance with 'Managing Public Money', HM Treasury will be asked to appoint the Chief Executive Officer as Acting Temporary Accounting Officer, who will assume full responsibility for the above in the Accounting Officer's absence.

A23. **Role of the Board**

A24. There is no requirement in legislation for the Ombudsman to appoint a Board. The role of the Board is therefore at the discretion of the Ombudsman and as a result, is advisory in nature. The Board makes collective decisions about the strategic direction and performance of the organisation. In practice, the Board works as a fully functioning unitary board but has no responsibility for individual cases.

A25. **Role of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**

A26. The role of the CEO is to lead the organisation to deliver its strategic, financial and operational objectives, as defined in the corporate strategy, the annual business plan and expenditure limits. Leadership must be exercised following direction of the Board in the context of approved policies.

A27. The CEO reports to the Board, in respect of organisational performance, and has performance of certain specific statutory responsibilities officially delegated by the Ombudsman, and financial responsibilities delegated by the Accounting Officer. These are set out in the scheme of delegation.

Section B – Standing Orders

B1. **Standing Orders**

- B2. These Standing Orders set out the basic rules and procedures for the Public Service Ombudsman Board and its committees (with appropriate alteration). All non-executive and executive Board and Committee members must be aware of them and be familiar with the details.
- B3. At any meeting, the Chair has the final decision on the interpretation of the Standing Orders (on the advice of the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff).
- B4. It is the duty of the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff to ensure that existing Board members and Officers are notified of and understand their responsibilities within the Board Standing Orders, the Scheme of Delegation, the Finance Code, the Procurement Code and the Code of Conduct, Ethics and Propriety for Board members.
- B5. The Standing Orders, the Scheme of Delegation, the Finance Code and the Code of Conduct, Ethics and Propriety for Board members will be reviewed regularly (every two years for the Finance Code and Scheme of Delegation and annually for the remaining) by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Updated copies will be made available to the Board and the whole organisation via the intranet (Ombudshub) and website following the completion of any review.
- B6. **Schedule, arrangements for and conduct of meetings**
- B7. As far as practicable, a calendar of Board and Committee meetings will be put in place a year in advance.
- B8. The Chair will give such directions as they think fit in regard to the arrangements for meetings, so as to ensure that business may be conducted without interruption and disruption and the confidential nature of any business can be respected when required.
- B9. At least 21 days' notice of an ordinary meeting will be given to members. A special meeting may be called at any other time by the Chair with a minimum of one week's notice.
- B10. Any meeting shall be convened by the Governance team by notice addressed to each member and stating the purpose of the meeting, whether for general business or any named special business. At a meeting convened for special business, no other business shall be dealt with except that given in the notice, unless the Board or Committee by a resolution agrees to consider any other business.

- B11. No part of any meeting shall be filmed, recorded or broadcast in any manner without the express permission of the Chair.
- B12. **Agenda and papers**
- B13. The final agenda will be approved by the Chair. The Governance team will then send details of the business to be considered to each member, at least five working days before the day of the meeting.
- B14. No business other than that which has been included in the agenda, or any raised under 'Any other business' and accepted as such for discussion by the Chair, will be discussed at any meeting, with the exception of urgent business which may be discussed with the prior consent of the Chair. The Chair has the discretion to alter the order of the agenda at the meeting.
- B15. In the case of special meetings, the requirements may be varied as circumstances require.
- B16. **Minutes of meetings**
- B17. Minutes will be taken at each meeting by a member of the Governance team who will record the attendance of members and all decisions made and the reason(s) for such decisions. Action points and minutes should be circulated to the Chair within 21 calendar days.
- B18. The Chair will agree the minutes before they are submitted for approval at the next ordinary meeting.
- B19. **Attendance**
- B20. Members are expected to attend meetings of the Board and of any other Committee where they serve in their capacity as a member or as Chair.
- B21. Once noted in the minutes as attending a meeting, members are expected to remain until business has been completed or the meeting otherwise terminated. In exceptional circumstances members may leave early by prior arrangement with the Chair. Where a member is not present for the whole of the meeting, the minutes must indicate for which items the member was present at the time of determination of the item.
- B22. The names of others 'In Attendance' at the meeting must also be recorded in the minutes.
- B23. A member failing, without reasonable cause, to attend 50 per cent of meetings in any 12-month period will be regarded as having made an insufficient contribution to the Board. This will be taken into account in the annual performance and development review and any reappointment. In exceptional circumstances, the member may obtain prior permission from the Chair for a leave of absence from attending Board meetings for a defined period.

B24. Adjournment

- B25. The Chair may adjourn a meeting to a fixed day and time, as directed by the meeting. Notice of the adjourned meeting shall be given to all members if a meeting is adjourned for seven days or more.

B26. Declarations of interest

- B27. No member may speak, vote or in any other way participate in debate where they have, or could be perceived to have, a personal interest in the matter under discussion except with the permission of the Chair.
- B28. Where a member has an interest in any matter under discussion, they should inform the Chair at the beginning of the meeting and, as needed, during the course of the meeting. The Chair may direct that any member with an interest will leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion.
- B29. Although members take no part in casework decisions, in the event that any member has any real or perceived connection with an organisation where a casework decision is discussed, they should remove themselves from the meeting for the duration of that discussion.
- B30. Members should err on the side of caution in making declarations. Failure to declare an interest will be regarded as a serious breach of the Code of Conduct (set out in Section G). If the withdrawal of a member makes the meeting inquorate, the meeting can continue but no decisions can be made.

B31. Decision Making and Collective Responsibility

- B32. As an advisory Board, the Board will endeavour to make decisions primarily by consensus. Only if this proves impossible will questions be decided by vote by a majority of members of the Board present. In the event of a tie, the Chair has the casting vote.
- B33. A record of the number of members voting for and against any recommendation at a meeting should be taken. A record of the number of members abstaining from a vote should also be taken. Members are required to support all Board decisions on the basis of collective responsibility even where they have voted against the decision.
- B34. Members may be asked to approve recommendations outside of meetings, by correspondence, if time requires a decision to be made. Approval will require five votes in favour of the recommendation.
- B35. Where it is known at a meeting of the Board that a decision is required to be taken before the next meeting, members will be informed at the meeting. Where a matter arises between meetings it will only be considered outside of a meeting with the permission of the Chair.

B36. Any request for a Chair's action will be supported by a report of an executive Board member or relevant director on the matter, together with the reasons for the urgency, and submitted to the Governance team. The Chair's action report and decision should be signed by the CEO prior to submission to the Chair.

B37. The Governance team will keep the original signed Chair's action report and maintain a register of decisions taken by Chair's action and make arrangements for Chair's actions to be reported to the next Board meeting.

B38. A Chair's action must not be used to revoke or vary the Governance Framework.

B39. Effect of vacancies on the validity of proceedings

B40. The validity of any proceedings of the Board shall not be affected by:

- A vacancy among the members of the Board;
- The participation of a member who has been subsequently suspended or removed from the Board.

B41. Board Committees

B42. The Board will establish an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, Remuneration and Nominations Committee, and a Strategic Delivery Committee. The Board may establish such other committees as it thinks fit and delegate work to those committees. The Ombudsman will appoint members of the committees and inform the Board.

B43. The Chairs of the Board's Committees will be appointed by the Ombudsman and will each hold office for the remainder of their term as non-executive Board member. Each Committee Chair will be a member of the Board.

B44. The Board will approve the terms of reference for its Committees at least every two years. Membership of the Committees will consist of non-executive Board members unless agreed that an independent member is appointed. If agreed the independent member is appointed for a term of two years, renewable up to a maximum term of five years. The independent member may resign from the Committee by writing to the Chair of the Committee providing 30 days' notice.

B45. A one-page summary of the meeting is submitted to the next Board meeting.

B46. Board and Committee Secretariat

B47. The Secretariat will:

- Agree the agenda with the Chair in line with the agreed forward programme to allow sufficient time for preparation and approval of reports.
- Upload the agenda with supporting documentation on Admin Control at least five working days before the meeting.

- Produce a minute of the attendees, proceedings and decisions, including further action required within specified timeframes.
- Confidential items will be subject to a separate record and will not be made available beyond members and other necessary recipients.
- Maintain a rolling log of actions and submit it to each meeting for review.
- Keep and maintain a register of members' interests.
- Maintain a forward programme of items for future meetings.

B48. Communication

B49. There should be a page on the intranet dedicated to governance matters. This should include a copy of this Governance Framework and the contact details of all Governance team members.

B50. Suspension of Standing Orders

B51. Except where this would contravene any statutory provision or any direction made by the Board, any one or more of the Board Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting, provided that at least two-thirds of the Board are present, and that a majority of those present vote in favour of suspension.

B52. A decision to suspend Board Standing Orders will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. No formal business may be transacted while Board Standing Orders are suspended.

B53. A separate record of matters discussed during the suspension of Board Standing Orders must be made and must be available to the Chair and Board members.

B54. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee must receive a report of every decision to suspend Board Standing Orders.

B55. Approval, Variation and Amendment of Board Standing Orders

B56. These Board Standing Orders and any amendment to them can only be approved if:

- A notice of motion has been given (i.e. at least 10 working days in advance).
- No fewer than half the total of the Board members vote in favour, either in person or in writing.
- At least five of the whole number of the Chair and Board members appointed participate in the ballot.
- The variation proposed does not contravene a statutory provision or direction made under the governing legislation.

Section C – Board Terms of Reference

C1. **Purpose**

- C2. The purpose of the Board is to make collective decisions about the strategic direction and performance of the Public Service Ombudsman.

C3. **Responsibilities**

- C4. The Board is a non-statutory unitary Board established at the discretion of the Ombudsman. To deliver its role, the Board focuses on:
- Strategy, planning and policy
 - Execution and impact of the strategy
 - Governance, including risk and assurance
 - Performance, including financial, customer experience and operations.
- C5. The Board has no responsibility for individual casework decisions or investigations. These remain the responsibility of the Ombudsman, managed within the Scheme of Delegation. Any changes to our service model which may significantly impact on our reputation must be brought to the attention of the Board.
- C6. Matters reserved for the Board include:
- Vision, mission, strategy and key policies¹
 - Annual business plan and budget
 - Annual Report and Accounts
 - All non-pay expenditure above £500k whether a single item, over the life of a single contract or constitutes the total cost of a project.
- C7. The personal accountability of the Ombudsman derived from statute is pre-eminent. Reflecting this statutory accountability, the Ombudsman has the right to disagree with Board decisions but will do so as a last resort and should put reasons in writing to the Board.
- ### C8. **Frequency of meetings**
- C9. The Board will meet at least five times per year for general business.

¹ Key policies are defined as the Governance Framework, the Finance Code, the Procurement Code, the Code of Conduct, Ethics and Propriety and the Service Charter.

C10. A special meeting will be held to sign off the Annual Report and Resource Accounts. An away day will usually be held annually to consider strategic priorities for the period ahead. One of the Board meetings each year will include a Board effectiveness review.

C11. **Reporting**

C12. Minutes of Board meetings will be drafted and submitted to the Chair for approval within 21 calendar days. Minutes will be submitted to the next ordinary Board meeting for approval.

C13. **Access**

C14. Where circumstances permit, staff members will be invited to observe the unrestricted part of the meeting (up to five staff members per meeting). The Board will operate in an open and transparent fashion, publishing minutes except where confidentiality necessitates discussions being held in private, or for some other special reason such as commercial sensitivity.

C15. **Membership**

C16. The Chair will be taken at all Board meetings by the Ombudsman. If for any reason the Ombudsman is absent from a meeting of the Board, the meeting will be chaired by the Senior Independent Member (SIM).

C17. The membership of the Board consists of both executive and non-executive members, with non-executive members in the majority. Total members will not exceed 13, including the Chair.

C18. Directors attend Board meetings to provide advice in respect of their areas and contribute to discussions but are not Board members.

C19. The Chair may appoint a Senior Independent Member (SIM). The duties of the SIM are:

- Act as a sounding board for the Chair on Board matters
- Be the focal point for Board members for any concerns regarding the Ombudsman, or the relationship between the Ombudsman and the Chief Executive
- When asked by the Chair and Board, the SIM will act as the main point of contact with Parliament for the appointment of a new Ombudsman
- Review and approve the Chair's expenses

C20. A Board member may resign their position on the Board by giving 30 days' notice in writing to the Chair.

C21. Appointment to the Board

C22. There is no requirement in legislation for the Ombudsman to appoint a Board. The role of the Board is therefore at the discretion of the Ombudsman and as a result, is advisory in nature. Non-executive members will be appointed by the Ombudsman after fair and open competition as set out in the 7 Principles of Public Life. Non-executive members will be appointed for a term of no more than three years, renewable for one further term only. Appointment will be through an open and transparent recruitment and selection process.

C23. The CEO and Deputy Chief Executive will be *ex-officio* executive members of the Board. The CEO will be appointed by the Ombudsman on the recommendation of the Remuneration and Nominations Committee.

C24. Quorum

C25. The quorum will be five and non-executives must be in the majority. A meeting of the Board shall stand adjourned if fewer than five Board members are present. Where a meeting becomes inquorate, business transacted before the meeting was inquorate will not be invalidated by the later lack of quorum.

C26. Effectiveness reviews

C27. The Board will conduct an annual review of its own effectiveness in respect of these functions.

C28. The Board will review its own Standing Orders and Committee Terms of Reference every two years.

Section D - Strategic Delivery Committee Terms of Reference

D1. **Purpose**

- D2. The Strategic Delivery Committee ('the Committee') is constituted as a committee of the Board.
- D3. The Committee's role is to provide assurance to the Board on the delivery and impact of the Corporate Strategy, scrutinising organisational performance by:
- Holding the Public Service Ombudsman to account for effective delivery against the strategy in particular relating to external activity
 - Maintaining strategic oversight of the effective implementation of our Transformation Programme, including digital and data.
 - Focusing on risks to the delivery of the strategy, particularly on outcomes and benefits relating to external activity
- D4. The People strand of the Corporate Strategy is not in scope of the Committee.

D5. **Responsibilities**

- D6. The Committee will consider and advise the Board on the following matters insofar as they are relevant to strategic delivery, in particular:
- **Addressing barriers to justice:** access to our service and user engagement.
 - **Strengthening the quality and speed of our service:** complainant experience including scrutiny of Service Charter data.
 - **Helping to improve public sector services:** engagement with organisations we investigate.
 - **Transformation:** including digital and data, and the journey to becoming a digital Ombudsman, to meet the objectives listed at Section D, paragraph 3.

D7. **Frequency of meetings**

- D8. The Committee will meet at least four times a year, timed to support timely reporting to the ordinary meetings of the Board.
- D9. The Committee may exceptionally meet more than four times a year to discuss specific issues, with the agreement of the Chair.

D10. Reporting

- D11. A one-page summary of the meeting will be submitted to the next ordinary Board meeting.
- D12. In collaboration with the Chair of the Committee, the Ombudsman may commission further reporting from the Committee to the Board at their discretion.

D13. Membership

- D14. At least three members.
- D15. The Committee should possess the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively engage with and challenge the organisation.

D16. Appointment to the Committee

- D17. The Ombudsman will appoint members of the Committee and inform the Board.
- D18. The Chair of the Committee will be appointed by the Ombudsman and hold office for the remainder of their term as non-executive Board member. The Committee Chair will be a member of the Board.

D19. Quorum

- D20. A minimum of two members of the Committee will be present for the meeting to be quorate. In the event that the meeting is inquorate, the meeting can consider its business but any decisions made or advice to the Board must be ratified by the whole Committee prior to action being taken.

D21. Attendance

- D22. In attendance at Committee meetings will also usually be:

- The Ombudsman
- The Chief Executive (CEO)
- The Deputy Chief Executive
- The Director of Strategy and Resources
- The Chief Digital and Transformation Officer
- The Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff
- The Head of Governance and Risk

- D23. Other executives and senior managers may be asked to attend Committee meetings for consideration of specific items relating to their respective areas of responsibility. This will be agreed with the Committee Chair prior to each meeting.

- D24. In support of our value of transparency, opportunities to observe Committee meetings will be promoted to all staff and agreed with the Committee Chair prior to each meeting.
- D25. The Committee will be provided with a secretariat function by the Governance team.
- D26. **Effectiveness Reviews**
- D27. The Committee will review its own effectiveness and report the results to the Board annually.

Section E - Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Terms of Reference

E1. **Purpose**

- E2. The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (the Committee') is constituted as a committee of the Board.
- E3. The Committee's role is to support the Ombudsman and Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer and Accountable Officer, respectively, in advising on the adequacy of the Office's corporate governance and control systems through:
- offering objective advice on issues concerning the risk, control and governance of the organisation and associated assurances provided by internal and external audit and other processes;
 - constructively challenging, where and when appropriate, executive decisions to ensure that these are the best possible and achieve value for money in the light of the available evidence; and
 - supporting the Accounting Officer and Accountable Officer ensure good judgment has been exercised through constructive challenge.

E4. **Responsibilities**

- E5. The Committee will consider and advise the Board, specifically the Accounting Officer and Accountable Officer, on the following matters:
- the Resource Accounts (giving particular consideration to those issues listed at Annex A);
 - accounting policies and practice relevant to the organisation (including compliance with required standards);
 - corporate governance assurances provided by internal and external audit and other assurance processes (the Committee and its activities shall be included in the Governance Statement), and the extent to which corporate governance is embedded throughout the organisation;
 - upholding standards of propriety in our business;
 - achievement of value for money;
 - the plans of internal and external audit, including assessing priorities and promotion of understanding of the role of audit within the organisation;
 - recommending further internal audits as appropriate beyond those agreed and budgeted for in the annual plan;

- the results of audit work, including individual audits, progress, follow-up and annual reports, and management letters;
- the adequacy of management responses to issues raised by internal and external audit; and of compliance with internal audit recommendations;
- the processes for assessing, reporting and owning business risks and their financial implications, including the capability of internal reporting systems to provide early warning of control failures and emerging risks; the adequacy of our assurance arrangements;
- the adequacy of systems of quality assurance for core activities;
- the appointment of internal auditors;
- the cost and performance of the internal and external audit services;
- the adequacy of the anti-fraud and bribery policy;
- the adequacy of the freedom to speak up: raising concerns policy;

E6. In order to undertake its duties effectively, the Committee should be provided with the following:

- internal and external audit strategy and plans (including planned co-operation between internal and external auditors);
- progress reports from the Head of Internal Audit on:
 - *work performed since the last meeting (with a comparison against work originally planned)*
 - *update on stage reached in each audit assignment planned*
 - *results of follow-up work on implementation of audit recommendations*
 - *key issues arising from internal audit work in the period*
- The draft Annual Report and Resource Accounts (including Governance Statement) for assessment;
- the Head of Internal Audit Annual Report and opinion;
- copies of all internal audit published reports for review and consideration;
- appropriate reports from members and attendees on areas covered by the Committee's remit including risk arrangements, quality assurance etc;
- the Strategic Risk Register;
- the External Audit Management Letter;

- proposals for changes of accounting policies;
- report(s) of any suspected fraud or serious irregularity;
- report(s) of any losses and special payments; and
- report(s) of all contracts awarded and/or appointments made through single tender actions of a value exceeding £3,000.

E7. Frequency of Meetings

- E8. The Committee will meet at least four times a year, to coincide with key points in the annual financial accounting cycle and in the delivery of work from internal audit providers and the National Audit Office (NAO).
- E9. The Committee may exceptionally meet more than four times a year to discuss specific issues, with the agreement of the Chair.

E10. Reporting

- E11. A one-page summary of the meeting will be submitted to the next ordinary Board meeting.
- E12. The Committee will provide the Board, specifically the Accounting Officer and Accountable Officer, with an Annual Report. This will be timed to support the preparation of the Annual Report and Resource Accounts, specifically the Governance Statement.
- E13. Where necessitated, the Committee may wish to raise issues of concern to the Board for its attention. On such occasion, the Committee Chair should agree the most appropriate procedure with the Accounting Officer and Accountable Officer.

E14. Access

- E15. The appointed Head of Internal Audit and the NAO will have free and confidential access to the Committee Chair.

E16. Membership

- E17. At least three members:
- Chair to be a non-executive Board member with relevant experience
 - The Committee may need to seek further independent, non-executive membership from sources other than the Board in order to ensure an appropriate level of skills and experience.
 - The Committee should possess the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively engage with and challenge the organisation.

E18. Appointment to the Committee

E19. The Ombudsman will appoint members of the Committee.

E20. The Chair of the Committee will be appointed by the Ombudsman and hold office for the remainder of their term as non-executive Board member. The Committee Chair will be a member of the Board.

E21. Quorum

E22. A minimum of two members of the Committee will be present for the meeting to be quorate. In the event that the meeting is inquorate, the meeting can consider its business but any decisions made or advice to the Board must be ratified by the whole Committee prior to action being taken.

E23. Attendance

E24. In attendance at Committee meetings will also usually be:

- The Ombudsman (as Accounting Officer);
- Chief Executive (CEO) (as Accountable Officer);
- Director and/or Assignment Manager of the External Auditor (NAO); and
- Partner/Director appointed Head of Internal Audit and/or Senior Manager (outsourced internal audit provider);
- Director of Strategy and Resources
- Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff
- Head of Governance and Risk

E25. Other executives and senior managers may be asked to attend Committee meetings for consideration of specific items relating to their respective areas of responsibility. This will be agreed with the Committee Chair prior to each meeting.

E26. The Committee will be provided with a secretariat function by the Governance team.

E27. Effectiveness reviews

E28. The Committee will review its own effectiveness and report the results to the Board annually.

Section E - Annex A

Considerations for the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in respect of the Public Service Ombudsman's Resource Accounts

- EA1. Before the Accounting Officer signs off the Annual Report and Financial Statements, the Committee should scrutinise:
- that the accounting policies in place comply with relevant requirements, particularly the Treasury's Financial Reporting Manual and Accounts Direction;
 - that there has been a robust process in preparing the accounts and annual report;
 - whether the accounts and annual report have been subjected to sufficient review by management and by the Accounting Officer and/or Board;
 - that when new or novel accounting treatments arise, whether appropriate advice on accounting treatment has been taken;
 - whether there is an appropriate anti-fraud policy in place, and whether losses are suitably recorded;
 - whether suitable processes are in place to ensure accurate financial records are kept;
 - whether suitable processes are in place to ensure regularity and propriety is achieved; and
 - whether issues raised by the External Auditors have been given appropriate attention.
- EA2. The Committee should satisfy itself that the annual financial statements represent fairly the financial position of the organisation.
- EA3. Before the Accounting Officer signs off the Letter of Representation, the Committee should review it and give particular attention to non-standard issues of representation.

Section F - Remuneration and Nominations Committee Terms of Reference**F1. Purpose**

- F2. The role of the Remuneration and Nominations Committee is to agree pay and performance review arrangements for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Deputy Chief Executive and the Directors, and to advise on their annual individual pay awards.
- F3. The Remuneration and Nominations Committee is a committee of the Board from which it derives its authority and to which it reports.

F4. Responsibilities

- F5. The Committee has specific responsibility for:
- F6. Annually reviewing and agreeing CEO, Deputy Chief Executive and Directors' pay and performance review arrangements, including criteria for any performance-related pay elements.
- F7. Considering how any individual pay anomalies or disputes concerning pay for the CEO should be resolved.
- F8. Reviewing the annual Remuneration and Staffing Report and making a recommendation to the Board on its inclusion in the Annual Report and Accounts.
- F9. Note: The Remuneration and Nominations Committee will be informed about annual pay settlements for pay bands 1-8 for consistency in approach, but decisions regarding this are matters for the CEO to negotiate and agree with the trade unions within the agreed overarching pay policy and arrangements.
- F10. The Remuneration and Nominations Committee will ensure that its decisions:
- Support the achievement of the organisation's strategic aims;
 - Are proportionate, fair and equitable, and support Equal Pay principles;
 - Take into account wider public sector pay policy and good practice;
 - Are supported by an appropriate level of information and analysis.

F11. Frequency of meetings

- F12. The Committee shall meet annually to agree annual pay awards and at other times as required.

F13. Reporting

- F14. A one-page summary of committee meetings will be submitted to the next ordinary Board meeting.

F15. **Access**

F16. The Committee will have access to expert HR and Remuneration advice.

F17. **Membership**

F18. The membership of the Committee shall be three non-executive Board members.

F19. **Appointment to the Committee**

F20. The Ombudsman will appoint members of the Committee.

F21. The Chair of the Committee will be appointed by the Ombudsman and hold office for the remainder of their term as non-executive Board member. The Committee Chair will be a member of the Board.

F22. **Quorum**

F23. The quorum necessary for the transaction of business shall be two members. If the meeting is inquorate, Committee decisions cannot be made and any discussions will be informal only.

F24. **Attendance**

F25. Relevant staff will be in attendance, except when matters directly relating to their own pay are discussed.

Section G - Codes of Conduct, Ethics and Propriety, Fit and Proper Person Policy**G1. The Public Service Ombudsman Values**

G2. All Board members are expected to abide by and exemplify the Values.

- Independence – We have integrity and impartiality in all decision-making.
- Fairness – We are respectful, inclusive and fair.
- Excellence – We are committed to high standards and are open to change and improvement.
- Transparency – We are open, honest and constructive.

G3. Code of Conduct

G4. Members of the Board must observe the [Cabinet Office Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies](#) (Cabinet Office, June 2019) whenever they conduct the business, or act as a representative of the Board.

G5. This contains guidance on:

- Use of Public Funds
- Allowances
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Use of Official Resources
- Use of Official Information
- Political Activity
- Employment and Appointments
- Conflicts of Interest
- Use of Social Media
- Raising Concerns

G6. Members of the Board are also required to observe the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life:

Principle	Description
Selflessness	Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
Integrity	Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
Objectivity	Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
Accountability	Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
Openness	Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
Honesty	Holders of public office should be truthful.
Leadership	Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

G7. **Register of Interests**

- G8. The Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff will establish and maintain a Register of Interests to record the interests of the non-executive and executive Board members. These details will be updated at least annually and confirmed at the first Board meeting of the financial year. At any time during the year, the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff may amend the register to take account of changes recorded in any supplementary statement lodged (not later than 10 clear working days after a statement of interests is lodged).

- G9. The Governance team will write annually to non-executive and executive Board members reminding them of the continuing requirements of these Board Standing Orders, but responsibility for registration of interests lies solely with the Board members. The Assistant Director of People and Talent will ensure that all employees including staff appointed through an agency are reminded of the need to register any interests on appointment and to keep the declaration up to date.
- G10. Initial registration of interests must not be made later than 21 days after the date of accepting office as a non-executive or executive Board member. Omissions or corrections must be notified to the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff immediately, if, after lodging a statement, a Board member becomes aware that they, or any member of his or her family, has a registrable interest in respect of which they have not lodged a statement. This is also the case if they realise that they have an interest which they thought did not need to be registered, but which is in fact later identified as a registrable interest. Changes to interests must be notified to the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff within 21 days after they have occurred.
- G11. **Voluntary statements**
- G12. A non-executive or executive Board member who has an interest which may be relevant to proceedings of the organisation but which is not a registrable interest, may at any time lodge with the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff voluntarily, a written statement giving details of the interest, including the date on which the interest was acquired. Board members may choose to provide details of any interest which they are not required to register, but which they think may be relevant and which they wish to register.
- G13. **Interests to be registered**
- G14. All relevant and material interests, whether pecuniary or non-pecuniary, must be registered. Non-executive and executive Board members need only register, at the point of initial registration, interests that they have at the date of their acceptance of office. They also need to register any interests that they held at least five years before they accepted office but no longer hold.
- G15. **Declarations of interests**
- G16. Non-executive and executive Board members must declare any interests in proceedings being considered by the Board and its Committees. Even if a Board member has already registered an interest, it should still be declared at the appropriate time when participating in proceedings. It might be appropriate for a member to declare an interest that does not have to be registered; however, having declared this interest, the member should then consider registering it.
- G17. Considering whether to declare an interest in proceedings, the member must consider not only whether they will be influenced, but also whether anybody else might

reasonably think that they might be influenced by the interest. The test to be applied is:

"Would the interest prejudice, or could it give the appearance of prejudicing, their ability to participate in the proceedings of the Board relating to that matter in a disinterested manner?"

G18. It is the personal responsibility of each Board member to judge whether an interest requires declaring, but they are advised to err on the side of caution. The interests of a Board member's spouse or domestic partner should also be considered in this context. If there is any doubt about the relevance of an interest, this must be discussed with the Chair or the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff.

G19. Timing of declarations

G20. Board members must declare any interest:

- At any proceedings of the Board and its committees, where a matter affecting a declarable interest is considered, or
- At meetings of any outside body to which they are appointed or nominated, or
- In other circumstances where they are active in a role other than for the organisation.

G21. Making a declaration

G22. Where there is an interest that must be declared, it must be:

- At the commencement of the proceedings in response to the formal request from the Chair for the declaration of interests, or
- If the member is unaware of the interest at the commencement of the proceedings, as soon as they become aware of the interest.

G23. When an interest is declared, the Board member is required to make an oral statement declaring the nature of the interest if requested to do so by the Chair.

G24. Ceasing to have an interest

G25. If, after lodging a statement of their interests, a Board member ceases to have an interest detailed in that statement, they are encouraged (but are not required to) lodge with the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff a written statement giving the date on which the interest ceased. These statements will ensure that the Register is kept up to date at all times.

G26. Effect of declaring an interest

G27. Non-executive and executive Board members may speak, but may not vote, on matters in which they have an interest that needs to be declared, unless the interest is considered by the Chair of the meeting to be of such a nature as to disqualify him or her from speaking on the matter, and must be reported to the meeting and recorded in the minutes.

G28. Where a Board member has an interest by reason only of a beneficial interest in securities of a company's activity in the lesser of £5,000 or 1% of the total value of the company, this does not prohibit the Board member from voting on any question with respect to it, without prejudice to their duty to disclose that interest.

G29. Recording of interests in the minutes

G30. At the time Board members' interests are declared, they must be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Any changes in interests must be declared at the next meeting following the change occurring and recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

G31. Fit and Proper Person Process

G32. All members of the Board, Directors, Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman are required to confirm annually that they are fit and proper to carry out their roles. The process also allows for additional senior staff to complete the declaration as deemed appropriate. This includes the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff.

G33. The Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff to seek annual declarations and to report the findings to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on an annual basis.

SECTION H - Assurance Framework

H1. **Purpose**

H2. HM Treasury defines an Assurance Framework as:

‘... a structured means of identifying and mapping the main sources of assurance in an organisation, and co-ordinating them to best effect.’

- Assurance Frameworks, HM Treasury December 2012

H3. In line with this definition the purpose of the Public Service Ombudsman’s Assurance Framework is to:

- Provide a clear shared corporate understanding of what assurance means for the organisation;
- Identify the areas the business is seeking assurance on;
- Identify the sources of assurance that meet the requirement;
- Set out the process whereby assurance is provided and the key principles, accountabilities and responsibilities to ensure this is effective; and
- Provide sufficient, continuous and reliable assurance on corporate stewardship and the management of the major risks to successful delivery of strategic aims and objectives and achieving value for money.

H4. The Assurance Framework is part of the organisation’s governance documentation.

H5. **What is meant by Assurance?**

H6. The Institute of Internal Auditors define assurance as:

‘... an objective examination of evidence for the purpose of providing an independent assessment on governance, risk management, and control processes for the organisation.’

- Institute of Internal Auditors Practice Advisory 2050-2

H7. For us, assurance is required in respect of assessing the planned delivery of our strategic aims and objectives, the effectiveness of control frameworks associated with key business processes, and the operation of governance and risk management arrangements.

H8. **Assurance Principles**

H9. The following principles are applied to the delivery of assurance activity:

- Assurance will be risk based;

- Assurance will reflect accountabilities set out in our scheme of delegation;
- Our assurance arrangements will reflect accepted good practice (e.g. built around the ‘three lines of defence’ assurance model).

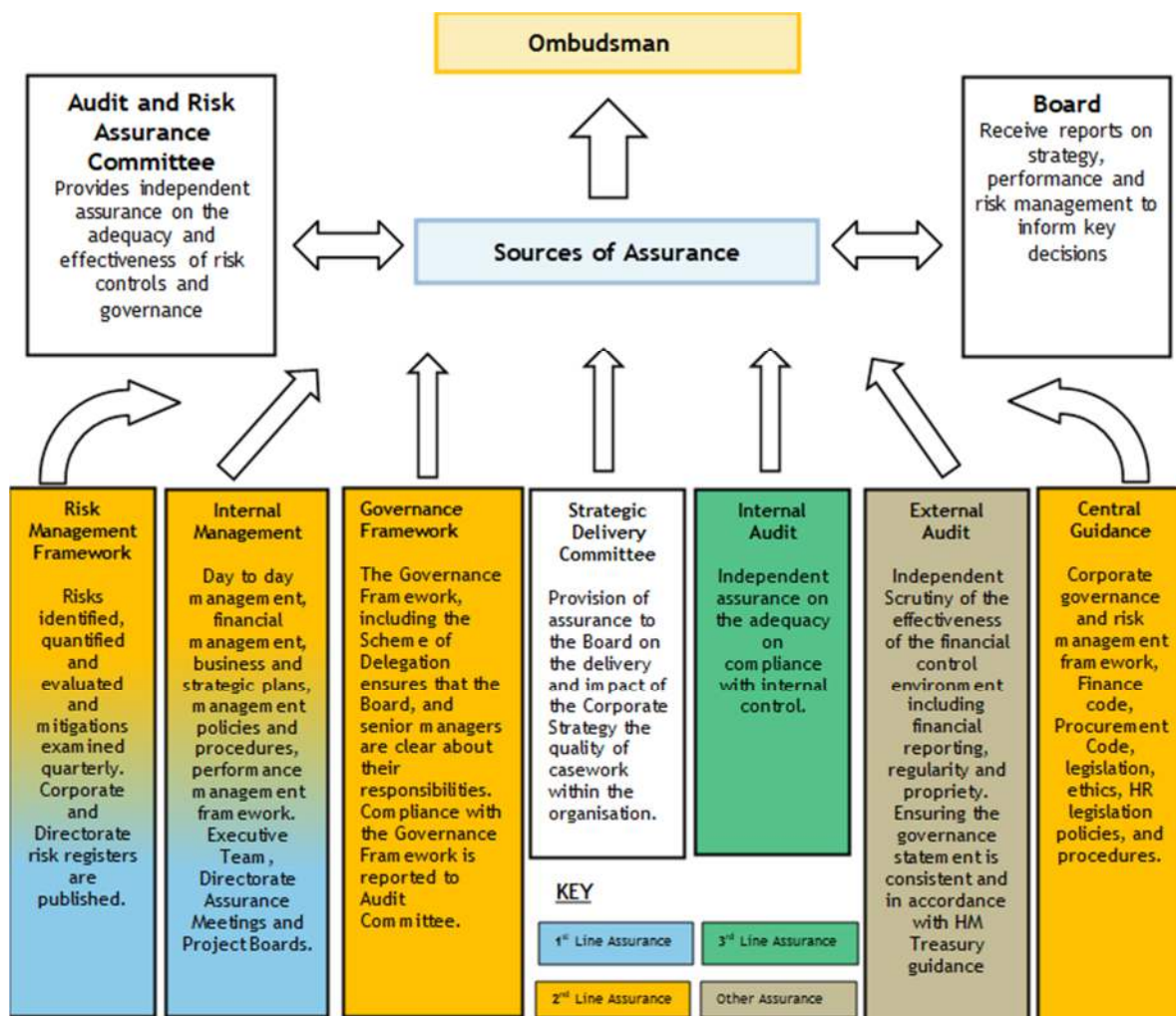
H10. **Sources of Assurance**

- H11. Assurance is taken from performance reporting, assessing the operation of key processes and their controls, and the management of risks and issues as they arise.
- H12. In line with Cabinet Office and Treasury guidance on control and assurance frameworks we operate the ‘three lines of defence’ approach to the provision of assurance. These are set out in the table below:

First line: Management Stewardship (operational delivery)	Second line: Management Oversight	Third Line: Independent Assurance	Other Assurance Outside the Three Lines of Defence Model
Description: The processes in place at the ‘front line’ of the business that can be used to derive assurance on how well objectives are being met and risks managed.	Description: The processes associated with the oversight of management activity. Provides management insight into how well work is being carried out in line with set expectations and policy or regulatory considerations.	Description: Independent assurance conducted to provide an Accounting officer with an opinion on the framework of governance, risk management and control.	Description: External Audit (i.e.NAO). External to the organisation with a statutory responsibility for certification audit of the financial statements.
Examples: Documented business process controls, management information, risk registers.	Examples: Compliance assessments, reviews of policy implementation, setting and monitoring internal guidelines	Examples: Primarily Internal audit but also provided by other independent bodies (e.g. Investors in People).	

Pros/Cons: May lack independence and objectivity but value lies in coming from those who know the business, culture and day to day challenges.	Pros/Cons: Separate from those responsible for delivery. More objective than first line, but not independent of the management chain.	Pros/Cons: Independent/objective assurance. Reliance placed on assurance mechanisms in first and second lines to target effectively areas of highest risk or gaps/weaknesses in control framework.	
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- H13. Within the organisation there are a number of sources of assurance operating across the three lines of defence that together deliver assurance sufficient to meet the needs of the business. These are set out in the following diagram:



H14. Roles and Responsibilities

- H15. **The Ombudsman/Chair as Accounting Officer** - Supported by the Board, responsible for ensuring robust governance, risk management and internal control arrangements are in place across the whole organisation.
- H16. **The Board** routinely monitor the mitigation of strategic risks. This supports the Accounting Officer in ensuring that there is regular and timely assurance.
- H17. **The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee** examines the arrangements in place to provide comprehensive and reliable assurance. This involves:
- Identifying the assurance need;
 - How it will be met;
 - Whether there are any assurance gaps or overlaps and how these can best be filled; and
 - Whether this will provide sufficient, relevant reliable assurance.
- H18. **Chief Executive Officer (CEO) - As Accountable Officer** provides the Accounting Officer and Board with assurance on the effective delivery of our planned aims and objectives, financial stewardship and probity.
- H19. **Executive Team (ET)** – Responsible for decisions regarding the effective operational leadership and direction for the work of the organisation.
- H20. **Directorate assurance meetings** - support the CEO in maintaining oversight across the organisation, and, in turn, provide assurance to the Ombudsman. The meetings are intended to provide assurance on performance, delivery, risk and issues at a directorate level.

SECTION I - Scheme of Delegation

I1. Introduction

- I2. This scheme of delegation (the Scheme) is intended to facilitate the efficient and effective functioning of the Public Service Ombudsman for all matters other than casework. The scheme is supported by the Scheme of Financial Delegation (SoFD) which details the levels of delegation for financial matters. A separate casework scheme of delegation sets out how the Ombudsman delegates this responsibility and where powers are reserved.
- I3. The Scheme sets out:
 - those powers and decisions reserved to the Ombudsman in the role of Accounting Officer and Chair of the Board;
 - those decisions reserved to the Board;
 - those powers and decisions the Board has delegated to the SIM, and its committees;
 - those decisions which it has delegated to the CEO as Accountable Officer, some of which may also be exercised by nominated officers of the Executive or by persons nominated by the CEO;
 - those decisions which it has delegated to other nominated officers of the Executive; and those decisions delegated to line managers.
- I4. The Executive, under the direction of the CEO remains responsible for the day to day administration of the organisation's affairs and nothing in the Scheme applies to any decision which is administrative in nature.
- I5. **Powers reserved to the Ombudsman in the role of Accounting Officer² and Chair of the Board³**
- I6. **Accounting Officer**
- I7. The power to sign the accounts, annual report and governance statement.
- I8. The power to approve voting budget limits and the associated Estimates Memorandum.

² The powers of the Accounting Officer originate from the Treasury Publication *Managing Public Money*. The Responsibilities of the Accounting Officer are outlined in full in the *Finance Code*.

³ Powers delegated by the Ombudsman.

I9. Chair of the Board

- I10. The power to determine whether there is a Board and its role.
- I11. The power to take decisions outside of Board meetings.
- I12. The power to appoint a Senior Independent Board member.
- I13. The power to call Special meetings.
- I14. The power to permit filming and recording of Board meetings.
- I15. The power to approve the Board agenda (in conjunction with the Executive Team).
- I16. The power to alter the Board agenda (during the meeting).
- I17. The power to agree the minutes prior to circulation to the Board.
- I18. The power to make urgent amendments to the Finance Code (in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee).

I19. Decisions reserved to the Board⁴

- I20. The Board is responsible for leadership, performance scrutiny, strategic risk and governance, strategy execution and the building and preservation of public confidence.
- I21. Approval of the vision, mission, strategy and key policies.
- I22. Approval of the annual business plan and budget.
- I23. Approval of the annual report and accounts.
- I24. Approval of business cases where total expenditure is above £500,000.
- I25. Approval of minutes as an accurate record.
- I26. The establishment and delegation of work to other Committees.
- I27. Approval of the forward Board programme.
- I28. The suspension of Standing Orders (requires a majority decision with two-thirds of members present).
- I29. Amendments to the Finance Code⁵

⁴ Powers delegated by the Ombudsman.

⁵ Finance Code

- I30. **Powers and decisions the Board has delegated to the Senior Independent (Non-Executive) Member (SIM)⁶**
- I31. The responsibility for acting as a sounding board for the Chair on Board matters.
- I32. The power to act as the main point of contact with Parliament for the appointment of a new Ombudsman (when asked by the Chair and Board).
- I33. Review and approval of the Chair's expenses.
- I34. Chairing of Board meetings in the absence of the Chair.
- I35. **Powers and decisions the Board has delegated to the Remuneration and Nominations Committee⁷**
- I36. The power to determine how any individual pay anomalies or disputes concerning the CEO's pay should be resolved.
- I37. The responsibility to support any Board member recruitment and selection process.
- I38. **Decisions delegated to the Chief Executive, some of which may also be exercised by nominated officers of the Executive or by persons nominated by the Chief Executive**
- I39. Accountability for all the services delivered by the organisation on a day-to-day basis as well as delivery of the strategic objectives and plan.⁸
- I40. Decisions regarding the leadership and management of the Executive Team and through them, ensuring that the organisation has the people, systems and processes to ensure high quality day to day delivery of business.⁹
- I41. The establishment and maintenance of the systems, controls, risk management processes to ensure high standards of probity in the management of public funds, ensuring that the Accounting Officer can meet the responsibilities of the role.¹⁰
- I42. Approval of losses and write offs.¹¹
- I43. To appoint staff not on the formal establishment.
- I44. Decisions in respect of redundancy costing more than £50,000 up to the level proscribed by HM Treasury (currently at £95,000).

⁶ Powers delegated by the Ombudsman.

⁷ Powers delegated by the Ombudsman

⁸ Role profile of the Chief Executive.

⁹ Finance Code

¹⁰ Finance Code

¹¹ Scheme of Financial Delegation

- I45. The commissioning of legal advice and responsibility for acting on the legal advice received.
- I46. Delegation below the CEO is set out in detail in documentation including the Executive Team Terms of Reference; Financial Scheme of Delegation; Casework Scheme of Delegation; Finance Code; and the Leave and Working Hours policy.

Section J - Board Effectiveness

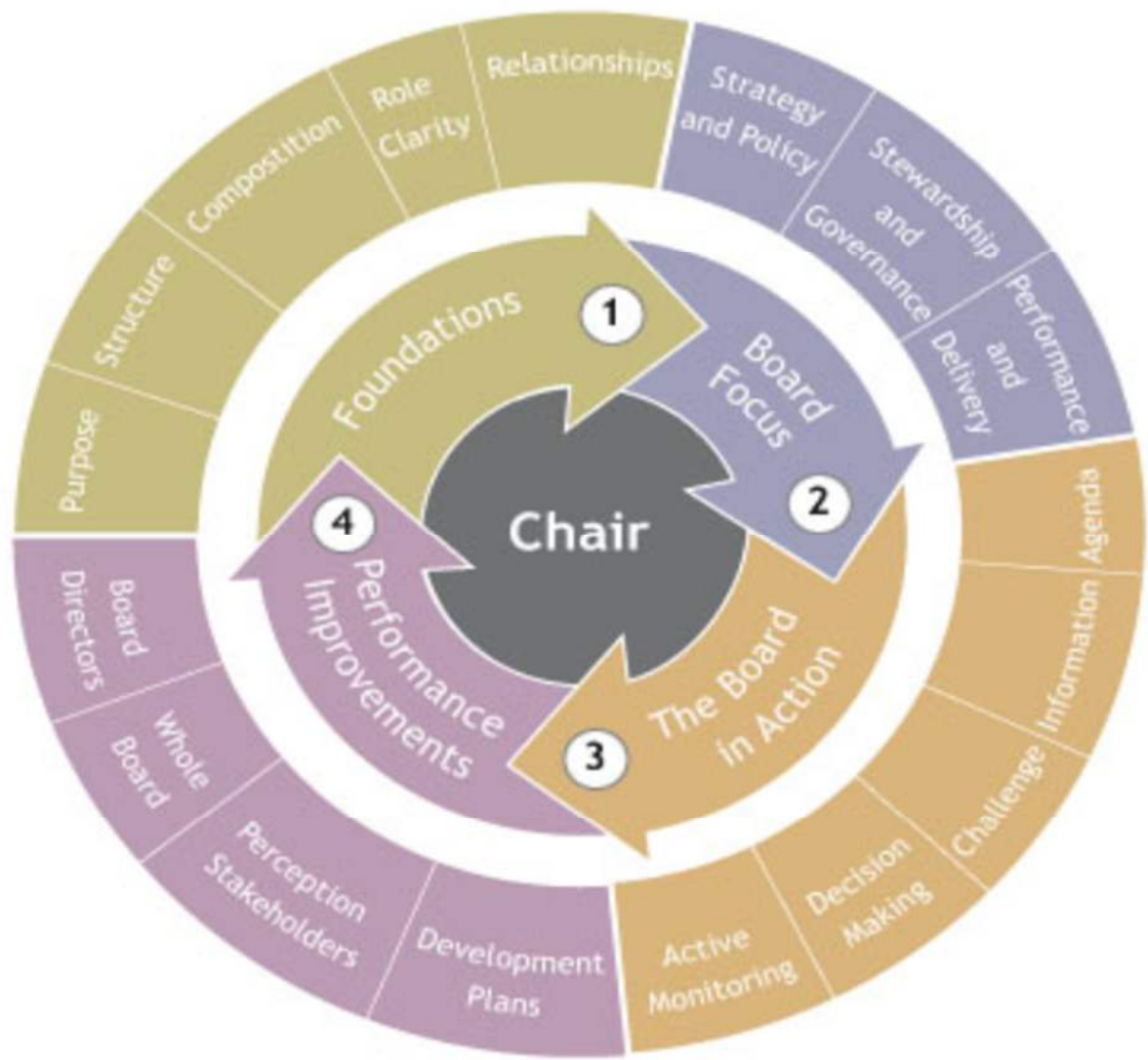
J1. Induction

- J2. The Ombudsman will ensure that individual members of the Board are informed about the terms of their appointment, their duties and responsibilities.
- J3. Board members will be expected to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and training to fulfil their duties and responsibilities and to meet their development objectives.
- J4. The Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff will arrange for a comprehensive induction programme, including additional briefings as appropriate, for non-executive Board members following their appointment. The induction programme will include an overview of the role of the Board, its members, operational procedures and functions and powers under which the Public Service Ombudsman operates its governance, strategic and operational frameworks and our organisational structure.
- J5. Appropriate arrangements should be made for the induction training and development of non-executive Committee members, to facilitate the effective discharge of their roles and responsibilities.

J6. Review of effectiveness and development

- J7. The Board will review its performance annually. This review may from time to time involve external advisers. The Board will agree the format for the annual review. The review will include consideration of the Board as a whole, the operation of committees, and the contributions of individual members of the Board. The review and development plans will be reported through our governance statement.
- J8. Arrangements should be made by the Deputy Director of Strategy and Chief of Staff for the Board to deliver the developments agreed at the annual review.
- J9. The Chair will assess the performance of individual non-executive Board members and agree objectives for the year ahead and development. Where performance or conduct of a non-executive Board member is not satisfactory such that the Chair considers a Board member is unable or unfit to carry out the duties of their office, the Chair may determine that their appointment be terminated.
- J10. The SIM will conduct the Chair's annual performance appraisal informed by a 360 degree feedback exercise conducted as part of the Board's annual effectiveness review, after consultation with non-executive Board members during a meeting.

J11. **Board Effectiveness Framework**



J12. This framework summarises the four areas considered in the annual review of effectiveness. The criteria for measuring effectiveness against this framework are described below.

J13. Criteria for Measuring Board Effectiveness**J14. Foundations**

- We are clear what we are trying to achieve and have this front of mind when planning and making decisions.
- We know how well we are doing in achieving intended outcomes.
- We have information on quality of service, user, staff and stakeholder perspectives to help us make decisions and use it effectively when planning and making decisions.
- We have information on costs and performance and comparisons with similar organisations to help us make rigorous decisions about improving value for money.

J15. Roles and Focus

- We are clear on the roles and responsibilities of non-executives and the executive, the chair and Chief Executive.
- We each know what we are supposed to be doing.
- We take collective responsibility for our decisions.
- We focus on our leadership and stewardship functions.
- The work of Committees supports the Board.
- The Executive feel held to account.

J16. Board in Action**J17. Practicalities**

- We are satisfied that we get meeting papers early enough.
- Board meetings are the right length and mix of formats.
- We are clear on the value sought from the Board for each agenda item.
- The number of Board meetings is appropriate to fulfil our roles and responsibilities.
- Format of papers are fit for purpose.

J18. Values and Behaviour

- We know the values we expect staff to demonstrate in their behaviour and actions.
- These values are reflected in our approach to decision making.
- We feel all are equal, valued and make an effective contribution.

- We feel respected, able to challenge and ask questions.

J19. Informed, Transparent Decisions and Managing Risk

- Our meetings are productive and effective – the Chair conducts the meetings well and all members (Chair included) can express their views.
- We are clear on decisions to be taken by the Board and those to be taken by the Chair and Ombudsman and by the Executive.
- We explain the reasons for our decisions to staff and stakeholders.
- The information we receive in board papers is robust and objective.
- Assessment of risk and planning of mitigation is robust and works well.

J20. Engaging Staff, Customers and Stakeholders

- We are clear who we are accountable to for what and accountability relationships work well. We take action to clarify and strengthen these relationships.
- We are clear on how we want to consult the public and users.
- We are clear on matters on which we consult and involve staff and this is well communicated and followed in practice.
- We are clear on the institutional stakeholders that we need to have good relationships with and organise ourselves to take the lead in developing those relationships at senior levels.
- We have our finger on the pulse of how staff feel.

J21. In order to assure information provided by the Executive we:

- Review, understand and where necessary challenge the available information.
- Understand the sources of the relevant information and assess its robustness.
- Interact directly with business lead, review plans, analysis and performance, challenge and commission further work when necessary.
- Review and discuss the Strategic Risk Register – confirm accurate identification of risks, assessment of scale and import and whether mitigation plans are fit for purpose.
- Undertake location activity interacting with staff and customers – observing practice first hand / experience of what happens.
- Utilise technical / specialist expertise – to provide independent view of specific content.

- Use comparative data from other organisations to evaluate the organisation's practice and performance.
- Gain external feedback / professional insight on core areas of practice.

J22. **Development**

J23. Developing capacity and capability of the Board and individual Board members.

- We are clear on the mix of skills we must have.
- We develop our skills and update our knowledge.
- We review the performance of individual board members giving feedback on what we value most and what we would like other to do differently.
- We put into practice action plans for improving performance of the board.

J24. Stakeholders and Board perceive we deliver:

- A healthy and sustainable organisation.
- To our service charter standards.
- Our strategy and plans.
- and that the organisation is held to account by the Board.

J25. Specifically:

- Parliament say we are a healthy organisation, providing excellent service and value for money.
- Staff feel listened to, they say we and our work are visible to them and our work adds value to the organisation.
- NAO gives unqualified audits and holds up our governance statement and arrangements as examples of good practice.
- Treasury confident we provide value for money and follow good governance practice.
- Board members reports.

J26. Stakeholders perceive we have impact:

- Complaints and bodies in jurisdiction are confident in our service.
- Parliament say we leverage our casework to help them hold government services to account for learning from complaints and improving services.

- We are seen as independent, authoritative and influential (as symbol and proxy for a whole range of more specific measures used to assess impact of strategy)
- The public say they are confident complaining is straight forward and fair, they are listened to and concerns addressed and services learn from complaints and improve.

Section K - Accountability to Parliament

K1. Annual Report and Accounts

- K2. The Public Service Ombudsman accounts to Parliament on its activities through a statutory Annual Report. The organisation also produces Resource Accounts under arrangements agreed with the Treasury, which are subject to audit by the National Audit Office. Since 2012-13 we have produced a combined Annual Report and Accounts document in three parts:
- **The annual report** - a review of the organisation's performance in the year as it strives to achieve its strategic aims and objectives;
 - **The governance statement** - The Accounting Officer's statement of how the organisation has discharged its responsibility to manage and control public resources during the course of the year; and
 - **The resource accounts** - to detail the resources acquired, held or disposed of and used by the organisation during the financial year.
- K3. In the Annual Report and Accounts we report on the general discharge of its functions, on the standards of service provided to complainants, and on the use of public money. We also report specifically from time to time on individual and/or systemic examples of maladministration.
- ### K4. Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC)
- K5. The Ombudsman and CEO appear at least annually before the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, which Parliament has chosen (through its Standing Orders) to be its principal liaison mechanism with the Ombudsman, to give evidence on the work of the organisation.
- K6. The remit of PACAC with regard to the Public Service Ombudsman, is set out in the House's standing orders, as set out below:
- "146 - There shall be a select committee to examine the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioner for England, which are laid before this House, and matters in connection therewith, and to consider matters relating to the quality and standards of administration provided by civil service departments, and other matters relating to the civil service; and the committee shall consist of eleven Members."*
- K7. One of the reports that the Ombudsman is statutorily obliged to produce (under section 10 of PCA 1967) is a report annually to Parliament.