



DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING

An in-person meeting of the COSCA Board was held on Monday 11th May 2026 from 11am – 1pm at the Barracks, Stirling.

PRESENT

Jan Kerr	Chair/ Training; Recognition Scheme
Carol Smart	Rurality
Ashlie McVey	Accreditation – Counsellors and Trainers
Lisa McGilvray	Ethics
Stuart Valentine	Relationship Counselling
Erica Wolfe	Lay Representative Co-optee
Brian Magee	(in attendance)
Christina Oliver	(Minute Recorder)

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending in person.

The Chair confirmed that the meeting was quorate and therefore able to proceed.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted from MP and LMcL.

3. Declarations of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared in relation to the agenda items.

4. Minutes and Matters Arising

4.1 Approval of Previous Minutes

The draft minutes of the Board Meeting held via Zoom on 23 February 2026 were reviewed. The Board approved the minutes as an accurate record.

4.2 Redactions

No redactions were requested.

4.3 Matters Arising

An update was provided on:

- The Scottish Government grant funding. It has been confirmed, although payment had not yet been received.

5. AGENDA ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

5.1 Agenda items for Information Overview

5.2 COSCA Corporate Affairs Group

Membership figures remained healthy overall, despite expected fluctuations at different points during the year.

5.3 Area of Interest Report

The Board thanked SV for his report from Relationships Scotland.

Discussion focused on funding challenges. It was noted that, while relationship counselling services across Scotland have broadly maintained funding in line with inflation over the past decade, funding for the national office has not kept pace. This has resulted in a real-terms reduction.

Concerns were raised about the sustainability of the national infrastructure and the importance of maintaining organisational stability. Comparisons were drawn with similar challenges faced elsewhere in the UK.

Board members reflected on wider sector pressures. These include rising overhead costs, increasing difficulty in evidencing outcomes to funders, and a shift in funding priorities towards broader wellbeing initiatives. The ongoing challenge of sustaining specialist counselling services was also highlighted.

Concern was expressed about the growing availability of short-term training routes, which may not adequately prepare practitioners for complex relational work.

5.4 Board Vacancy: Lay Representative

The Board noted that the application form and briefing pack for the Lay Representative vacancy are available on the COSCA website under vacancies and have also been advertised more widely.

The deadline for applications is 18 May 2026. Further updates will be provided in due course.

5.5 COSCA New Chair Appointment Update

The Board received an update on the Chair appointment process.

The interview panel, comprising JK, the current Chair, CE and MP, identified a unanimous preferred candidate following interviews. This recommendation will be formally presented under Agenda Item 9.2.

5.6 COSCA Treasurer Vacancy

The Board was informed that no nominations have yet been received for the Honorary Treasurer role. The application deadline has been extended to 24 May 2026.

Board members were encouraged to identify and approach potential candidates. Appreciation was expressed to CS for offering to prepare the treasurer's report during the interim period.

Discussion highlighted the difficulty of recruiting volunteer treasurers.

Board members considered whether additional advertising routes should be explored and reflected more broadly on the challenge of attracting individuals with financial expertise to governance roles.

5.7 Scottish Government Grant 2026–2027

BM noted the letter of confirmation about the Scottish Government grant for 2026-27.

BM advised the Board that the above funding was linked to COSCA's work in relation to the renewal of PSA's accreditation of COSCA's Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

Discussion emphasised the importance of continued PSA membership. Members also noted the increasing workload associated with compliance and raised concerns about growing conditionality attached to grant funding.

The potential implications of future changes to PSA expectations were considered. The Board acknowledged the significant work required to maintain accreditation and regulatory standards.

5.8 COSCA E-Bulletin February 2026

This item was noted.

5.9 COSCA Annual General Meeting 2026

The AGM was confirmed for 30 September 2026.

5.10 COSCA Ethics Committee

The Board received an update from the Ethics Committee meeting held on 24 March 2026. The primary focus was the review of draft guidance on the use of artificial intelligence within counselling and psychotherapy practice.

Discussion explored the need to balance practical guidance with avoiding overly prescriptive recommendations. The role of supervision in addressing AI-related ethical issues was also highlighted, alongside the possibility of future regulation in this area.

5.11 PSA New Standards

The Board discussed updated standards introduced by the Professional Standards Authority.

These include a move towards a single, consistent framework. Greater emphasis is placed on wellbeing, organisational culture, leadership, safeguarding, risk management, and collaboration. There is also an increased focus on professional suitability and safeguarding responsibilities.

The Board considered the operational implications including such things as safeguarding, identity verification, disclosure checks, suitability assessments for self-employed practitioners, and data-sharing responsibilities.

The complexity of safeguarding decisions and expectations placed on voluntary registers was noted, and the differences between statutory and voluntary regulation.

Further discussion covered complaints handling processes and the importance of maintaining compassionate and proportionate responses, while ensuring public protection.

5.12 PSA Single Register Project

The Board discussed proposals for a central practitioner register search function.

Members noted potential benefits for public access and transparency. However, concerns were raised about public misunderstanding of the use of the PSA logo without a linkage to a PSA accredited register and the potential misuse of the PSA logo if it is not policed.

The importance of clearly distinguishing between accredited and non-accredited practitioners was emphasised. Questions were also raised about how such a system would operate in practice and who would pay for it.

5.13 PSA Annual Seminar 2026

The Board received feedback from the seminar held on 21 April 2026.

The seminar focused on new PSA standards, organisational maturity, compassionate complaints handling and safeguarding.

Board members reflected on the increasing complexity of complaints processes, particularly where legal considerations are involved.

6. Financial Incident Update and Discussion

The Board received a detailed and serious update regarding a significant financial incident affecting COSCA. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Decisions

- The Board agreed that the seriousness of the financial incident requires continued close oversight and formal governance response.
- It was agreed in principle that COSCA should proactively inform OSCR of the situation and seek guidance, as part of a transparent and responsible approach.

[REDACTED]

Actions

- BM to continue liaising with the bank’s fraud investigation team and provide updates to the Board as the investigation progresses.
- SV & JK to initiate contact with OSCR to notify them of the incident and seek advice on appropriate next steps.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- To revisit the situation at the next meeting (or sooner if required) to review progress, risks, and any further decisions required.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

It was suggested that the Board reconvene within two weeks to review progress and consider any further actions required.

It was agreed that a Doodle Poll would be circulated to identify a suitable date for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at approximately 1:15pm.