

MINUTES

AB - Public

Audit Committee

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick

Tuesday 19 August 2014 at 10am

Present:

A Duncan	A Westlake
M Burgess	S Coutts
B Fox	A Manson
T Smith	M Stout
V Wishart	

Apologies:

None

In attendance (Officers):

C Ferguson, Director of Corporate Services
C McIntyre, Executive Manager – Audit, Risk and Improvement
J MacLeod, Performance and Improvement Adviser
K Adam, Solicitor
L Adamson, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Mr A Duncan, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

None

21/14 Minutes

The minutes of Audit Committee held on 18 June 2014 were confirmed on the motion of Mr T Smith, seconded by Mr Fox.

18/14 – Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 16/14 – Local Government Benchmarking Framework – Reporting 2012-13 Data

In response to a question, the Performance and Improvement Adviser informed on the work ongoing with Audit Scotland representatives to improve the content of the Council's performance submissions, and on the expectation of an improvement in the Council's submission next year.

22/14 Audit Scotland Reports

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Audit, Risk and Improvement (IP-19-14-F), which contained links to all public reports produced by Audit Scotland, that are not part of separate reports to this Committee.

The Performance and Improvement Adviser summarised the main terms of the report. During the discussion, it was agreed in instances when Members request further information to be provided from Officers, the response should be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

In response to a question from Ms Manson, the Performance and Improvement Adviser advised on the previous response provided to Committee in regard to the numbers of care centre staff who have received redundancy then have been re-employed by the Council. In referring to the legislation relevant to Local Government, the Solicitor reported that in this situation an employee cannot be re-employed within four weeks of having received redundancy, or would have to pay back their redundancy payment. He added that all applications for re-employment have to be approved by the Executive Manager – Human Resources.

In making reference to the changes proposed for reporting of external audit reports, Mr Coutts made a suggestion in regard to Lead Officers attendance at Audit Committee. Following a brief discussion, the Committee agreed that in instances where there are concerns following reporting on an issue from an external audit report to the relevant functional Committee, the Lead Officer's attendance is required at Audit Committee. Mr Stout commented that the proposals for reporting on external reports is a step forward and is more closely aligned to the remit of Audit Committee.

In referring to Appendix 1 and the excerpt from the report "Procurement in Councils", Ms Westlake advised of her intention to meet with the Council's Procurement Manager to discuss areas of procurement activity, and she would report any issues back to Committee.

The Chair made reference to the excerpt from the "Reducing reoffending in Scotland – Impact Report", where he advised of his concern to note the total economic and social costs for Scotland of reoffending are about £3 billion a year. In that regard, the Chair sought information on the costs to the Shetland economy from reoffending to be provided to all Members of the Committee. It was suggested that this request for information be directed to the Council's Executive Manager – Criminal Justice, while it was acknowledged that criminal justice is being taken forward through multi-agency intervention to create better outcomes through joint working.

During the discussion, the Chair enquired on the ranking of the Council from the findings of the report "Scotland's public finances – a follow up audit: Progress in meetings the challenges", and that the response be circulated to all Members of the Committee.

In referring to the report "Self-directed support", the Chair asked for an update on how the Council fits into the progress as reported in the excerpt statement. The Director of Corporate Services advised that a significant amount of work was being directed at Self-directed support, and she undertook to provide an update on progress and an indication of when the full report will be ready for presentation.

Ms Wishart made reference to the report at No. 9, "School education", and advised that she would expect the report on attainment at Shetland schools to be reported to Education and Families Committee in October/November 2014.

Decision:

The Committee **RESOLVED** to consider the linked reports in Appendix A to the report, highlighting any issues that should be monitored or further addressed through this Committee, other Committees or by Council management.

The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the proposal to the Policy and Resources Committee to change the way External Audit/Adviser's reports are handled by this, and other Committees.

23/14

Committee Business Programme – 2014/15

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader - Administration (GL-13-14-Audit-F), which informed of the planned business to be presented to Committee over the remaining quarters of the current financial year to 31 March 2015, seeking discussion with Officers regarding any changes or additions required to that Programme.

The Committee Officer introduced the report.

Mr Fox made reference to the Committee's earlier decision for officers to attend Committee to answer questions on issues from external audit reports, and also to the financial implications paragraph at 4.7, "there are no direct financial implications in this report, but indirect costs may be avoided by optimising Member and officer time". Mr Fox said that although the prolonged attendance by officers at meeting has improved, officer attendance needs to be looked at for all Committees, with a better mechanism found rather than officers sitting through a full meeting when their report is late on the agenda. During the discussion, the benefit of the relevant officer being in attendance to respond to questions from Members was also acknowledged. The Director of Corporate Services said that she recognised that a balance has to be reached in regard to officer attendance at meetings, and she undertook to look into this, to ensure best use of officer time and resources.

Decision:

The Committee **RESOLVED** to consider its business planned for the remaining quarters of the current financial year to 31 March 2015.

The meeting concluded at 10.20 am.

.....
Chair