

# MINUTES

## A&B - Public

### Audit Committee

Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick

Tuesday 3 February 2015 at 10.00am

#### Present:

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

#### Apologies:

A Manson  
T Smith (for lateness)  
M Stout  
A Westlake

#### In attendance (Officers):

C McIntyre, Executive Manager – Audit, Risk and Improvement  
J MacLeod, Performance and Improvement Adviser  
P Dinsdale, Team Leader - Environment  
K Adam, Solicitor  
A Tait, Solicitor  
B Kerr, Communications Officer  
L Adamson, Committee Officer

#### Also in Attendance

I Lochhead, Audit Scotland  
K Macaulay, Audit Scotland

#### Chairperson

Mr A Duncan, Chair of the Committee, presided.

#### Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

#### Declarations of Interest

None

#### Minutes

The minutes of Audit Committee held on 18 November 2014 were confirmed on the motion of Ms Wishart, seconded by Mr Fox.

#### 01/15 Audit Scotland and other External Audit Reports

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Audit, Risk and Improvement (IA-02-15-F) being the first in a series of reports allowing Members to track the Council's actions relating to reports received from external Auditors/Advisers.

The Executive Manager – Audit, Risk and Improvement introduced the report. He advised that following reporting on the external audit reports to the relevant Committees, to ensure that Members can continue to monitor that actions are being progressed, a link to the reports and minutes will be provided to Audit Committee.

Members were advised that as the Best Value reports could contain a range of actions to be addressed by various officers these will be co-ordinated through the Audit, Risk and Improvement Service.

*(Mr T Smith attended the meeting).*

A Member made reference to the “Accounts Commission – Orkney Community Planning Partnership” report, where he enquired whether any lessons can be learned from the findings in that report. It was advised that the Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development will be reporting to Policy and Resources Committee on the national community planning audit report in April 2015, where Members will get the opportunity to ascertain whether the audit comments made on all other Councils would apply locally.

A Member commented on the additional workload on officials from the processes required in reporting on external reports, where he questioned if there were adequate resources to ensure timely reporting. The Executive Manager – Audit, Risk and Insurance said that any delays in reporting will be advised to the Audit Committee

Ms V Wishart made reference to the 3 Care Inspectorate reports recently presented to Education and Families Committee, where she reported that the findings from the unannounced visits had been very good.

#### **Decision:**

The Committee noted that:

- lead officers and Committee have been tasked with considering the external reports listed in Appendix 1 to the report, and
- a response/action plan on each report from those Committees will be reported back to the Audit Committee for consideration.

02/15

#### **Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2013/14 Indicators**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Audit, Risk and Improvement (IA-01-15-F) which presented the third set of public results from a national benchmarking exercise carried out across all Scottish Councils. (Due to an error in the graph relating to Indicator SW 3 “How many older people with intensive needs are supported by my Council so that they can remain at home?” an updated page was tabled at the meeting).

The Performance and Improvement Adviser summarised the main terms of the report. He added that any questions from Members where there is no officer present in which to respond, will either be followed up by an e-mail or a separate report to Committee.

In referring to Indicator CORP5b2 “How long does it take my Council to attend a domestic noise complaint on average?”, the Team Leader – Environment acknowledged that Shetland’s performance, compared to all other local authorities, appeared very poor. However she went on to inform that the figures are skewed as the Council deals with only a small number of noise complaints, which can be in very remote areas, on a very intermittent basis. In response to a question, the Team Leader – Environment reported on the dialogue that takes place with general

needs tenants prior to their allocation to a property in sheltered housing schemes, to raise their awareness and mitigate any situations that could impact on their elderly neighbours.

A Member sought an explanation for there being no information provided to inform on Shetland's performance relating to Indicator CHN 8a, "How much does my Council spend on providing residential accommodation for 'looked after children'". During a brief discussion, the Performance and Improvement Adviser indicated that there had been some uncertainty in regard to the definition of the indicator. It was further advised that the 2013/14 figure would be available from the Director of Children's Services, and it was therefore agreed that this information be requested and e-mailed to Members.

A Member noted, with concern, Shetland's poor performance compared to all other Authority areas in regard to Indicator CORP 2, "How much does my Council spend on supporting Elected Members". In referring to the explanation provided in the report, he acknowledged the wide-ranging costs that are currently included in Shetland's total for 2013/14. He further acknowledged that should certain costs be removed and reallocated to another Directorate this would only move the costs to impact on Shetland's performance on other indicators. The Executive Manager – Audit, Risk and Improvement advised that he had received a briefing note from the Finance Service which provides further explanation in regard to this Indicator. He suggested this could be provided to Members. However, following a brief discussion, it was agreed that a report would be presented to Audit Committee in April that would provide further clarity and an opportunity for Member discussion.

In referring to Indicator SW 5 "How much does my Council spend on providing residential care for older people", Mr Burgess noted that Shetland was the most expensive authority in terms of service provision, where he recognised that most of the costs would relate to staffing. He went on to advise that energy costs would also be fairly significant at care homes, and he suggested that a report be presented to Audit Committee to inform on any initiatives and improvements that could be made to reduce energy costs. Mr Coutts advised that the Environment and Energy Team were looking at energy usage in community facilities, which would include the care centres, where he understood that the findings from that work would be reported to Environment and Transport Committee. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that assurance be sought from the Executive Manager – Estate Operations in regard to reporting to Committee in early course.

Reference was made to Indicator HSN 5 "How energy efficient is the housing provided by my Council as measured by the Scottish Housing Quality Standard", where further explanation was sought in regard to the reduced performance between 2012/13 and 2013/14. As the officer was not at the meeting, it was agreed that an explanation would be provided to Members by e-mail.

During the debate, Mr T Smith outlined his concerns that a number of the indicators did not present true comparisons between the Local Authorities, and that this was of particular concern as the performance information is publicly available. Mr Burgess referred to Indicators SW1 and SW2, which relate to providing care for older people to live in their home and how many people needing social work support get to choose how their support needs will be met. He said that with the limited range of options available for care provision locally, Shetland could continue to rank low on these indicators.

The Chair said that while he concurred with the concerns raised by Mr T Smith and acknowledged that further improvements have to be made, he stated that the benchmarking exercise for 2013/14 demonstrates a lot of good work by Council staff.

**Decision:**

The Audit Committee noted the contents of the report.

-----

Mr I Lochhead, Audit Scotland, provided a brief update on progress with the Annual Audit Plan for 2014/15, which he advised should be ready for presenting to the next meeting of the Committee.

The meeting concluded at 10.40am.

.....  
Chair