

Minute of Meeting Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 19 September 2016	10:00	CMR 1, Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

PRESENT

Councillors Bibby, M Brown, Caldwell, M Devine, Provost Hall, Councillors J MacLaren, Perrie and J Sharkey.

CHAIR

Councillor J Sharkey, convener, presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

C Grainger, Service Planning & Policy Development Manager, lead officer, D McNab, Transportation Manager and E Lorimer, Supervisory Transportation Officer (all Community Resources); A MacArthur, Head of Finance, R McGrath, Head of Customer & Business Services, L Belshaw, Democratic Services Manager, S Fanning, Senior Health & Safety Officer, A McMahon, Chief Auditor and L Mullin, Principal HR & OD Adviser (all Finance & Resources).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J Sharkey declared an interest in item 10 of the agenda as he was a member of the Kids Need Our Ward campaign.

ALSO ATTENDING

B Howarth, Assistant Director, and A McGregor, Senior Audit Manager (both Audit Scotland).

1 AUDIT OF ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2015/16

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Audit of Annual Accounts 2015/16. The report intimated that each year the Council's appointed external auditors (Audit Scotland) carried out an audit of the Council's financial statements and provided an opinion as to whether those statements provided a fair and true view of the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure for the year. The audit also gave an opinion on whether the accounts had been prepared in accordance with the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. In addition, Audit Scotland also audited the accounts of the charities which the Council controlled, ie Common Good Funds and other Charitable Trusts. In accordance with International Auditing Standards (ISA260) Audit Scotland were obliged to report to those charged with the governance of the organisation matters which had arisen in the course of the audit.

Under the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, the Council must meet to consider the Annual Accounts and aim to approve those accounts for signature no later than 30 September. The audited financial statements would be presented to Council for approval at the meeting on 29 September 2016.

DECIDED: That the report, and attached Audit Scotland reports be noted.

2 SUMMARY OF INTERNAL AUDIT FINDINGS TO 30 JUNE 2016

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the requirement, in terms of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), that Internal Audit communicated the results of each engagement to the Board. The appendix to the report provided a summary of findings in relation to final reports issued for those engagements completed during the period 1 April to 30 June 2016.

The report intimated that, in addition to the reports listed in the appendix, Internal Audit had an ongoing commitment to arrange corporate and service initiatives, progress information security matters in partnership with ICT and Legal Services, provide regular advice to officers and Internal Audit services to the associated bodies for which Renfrewshire Council was the lead authority and to Renfrewshire Leisure Limited, co-ordination of the Council's corporate risk management activity and management of the benefit investigation and insurance teams.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

3 INTERNAL AUDIT AND COUNTER FRAUD PROGRESS AND PERFORMANCE TO 3 JUNE 2016

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to internal audit and counter-fraud progress and performance for the period 1 April to 30 June 2016 in terms of the delivery of the audit plan. The report outlined the percentage of audit work completed as at 30 June 2016. The report referred to the introduction of a revised audit management system, and also recommended changes to the Audit Plan to accommodate increased resources being targeted towards anticipated unplanned work and these were set out in the report.

It was noted that the resources in the Audit Plan would be regularly monitored and any audits recommended for cancellation would be reinstated to the plan on a priority basis.

The report intimated that in terms of counter-fraud, the current focus was in establishing priorities and ensuring that there were adequate policies and procedures in place to support the counter-fraud agenda.

DECIDED:

(a) That the internal audit and counter-fraud team progress and performance to 30 June 2016 be noted; and

(b) That the proposed changes to the internal audit plan be approved.

4 INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the Internal Audit Charter which was reviewed on an annual basis. The Charter had been developed to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which came into effect on 1 April 2013 and had been revised in April 2016 to include the Mission of Internal Audit and the Core Principles for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. The new Charter reflected these revisions.

In addition, the report intimated that the current review had identified that it would be beneficial to include a section detailing the arrangements for internal audit in the Council's associate and other bodies. The appointment of the Chief Auditor as the Chief Internal Auditor for the Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Integration Joint Board and recognition that Internal Audit might undertake work for other organisations on a commercial basis, where this was in the interests of the Council, was also reflected.

DECIDED: That the Internal Audit Charter be approved.

5 NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE IN SCOTLAND

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to Audit Scotland's report, published in June 2016, on the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) in Scotland. The NFI was a national data matching exercise carried out by Audit Scotland with the aim of identifying instances of possible fraud or error. The NFI 2014/15 involved 104 Scottish bodies across three sectors. The initiative which was co-ordinated in this Council by internal audit, operated on a two-year cycle with the data being downloaded and electronically matched centrally one year and the results issued, investigated and reported in the next. In October 2014 data was downloaded from the Council's systems onto the NFI website and matched. Examples of matches were Council tax records to the latest Electoral Register, housing benefit to employees and public sector occupational pensions, and blue badge records to deceased persons' records. The Council had to date identified housing benefit overpayments of £202,278 and had achieved the second highest level of outcomes from their 2014/15 NFI investigations.

The report highlighted that Scottish public bodies had recorded outcomes of £16.8 million since the last NFI report in June 2014. The cumulative outcomes from the NFI in Scotland were now around £110.6 million and £1.39 billion across the UK.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the report from Audit Scotland and the significant outcomes for Renfrewshire Council be noted;
- (b) That the Council's current arrangements and improvement actions arising from the recommendations contained within the Audit Scotland report be noted; and
- (c) That it be noted that a further NFI exercise would be carried out in 2016/17.

6 ABSENCE STATISTICS

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Council's absence statistics for the period 1 January to 19 June 2016. The report provided information in relation to absence targets and how services and categories of staff had performed against them. An analysis of the reasons for absence for the period was included in the report. Information was also provided on supporting attendance activity levels by service and costs of sick pay. The overall number of days lost during 2015/16 and for the equivalent quarters in the previous year were shown.

It was proposed that, if possible, evidence in relation to the outcomes of work-related stress be reported to a future meeting of the Board. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That, if possible, evidence in relation to the outcomes of work-related stress be reported to a future meeting of the Board.

7 AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORTS - BENEFITS PERFORMANCE AUDIT ANNUAL UPDATE 2015/16 AND HOUSING BENEFIT GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to Audit Scotland's report 'Benefits Performance Audit Annual Update 2015/16', appendix 1 to the report, which provided a summary of the performance audit work carried out by Audit Scotland on the housing benefit services during 2015/16, including Renfrewshire Council. The report highlighted key issues from the risk assessments carried out and identified good practice.

The report intimated that in April 2016, Audit Scotland issued a 'Best Practice Guide', appendix 2 to the report, which summarised initiatives which had been introduced by councils and identified by the risk assessments carried out during 2013/14 and 2014/15. It was noted that officers had reviewed in full all of the best practice examples and had established a working group to consider the ideas and assess the appropriateness of their application in Renfrewshire.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the Audit Scotland Report 'Benefits Performance Audit Annual Update 2015/16' be noted; and
- (b) That the Audit Scotland Report 'Housing Benefit Good Practice Guide' be noted.

8 ACCOUNTS COMMISSION REPORT - "MAINTAINING SCOTLAND'S ROADS - A FOLLOW-UP REPORT" DATED 4 AUGUST 2016

There was submitted a joint report by the Directors of Community Resources and Finance & Resources relative to the Accounts Commission report - "Maintaining Scotland's Roads - A Follow-up Report".

The report intimated that the Accounts Commission published reports on road maintenance in 2011 and 2013. The latest report, published on 4 August 2016, reviewed changes in road condition and spending on roads maintenance since the 2011 report; progress made against previous audit recommendations; and progress made against the actions set out in the National Roads Maintenance Review. The report provided the key highlights from the latest Audit Scotland report and outlined the positive position of Renfrewshire Council in respect of the findings, including that between 2011/12 and 2014/15, Renfrewshire roads had improved by 2% with 14 councils having seen road condition deteriorate and 18 having seen improvement; and that Renfrewshire spent slightly more in 2014/15 than was considered necessary to maintain road condition, with 18 councils having not spent enough and 14 councils having spent more.

It was proposed that in relation to those 18 councils that had seen improvement in their road condition, further information be provided to members on the percentage improvement, if possible. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

(a) That the findings of the Audit Scotland Report "Maintaining Scotland's Roads - A Follow-up Report" and Renfrewshire's position in respect of observations and recommendations be noted; and

(b) That in relation to those 18 councils that had seen improvement in their road condition, further information be provided to members on the percentage improvement, if possible.

9 AUDIT, SCRUTINY AND PETITIONS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Board's 2015/16 annual report, prepared in terms of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance, which highlighted the issues considered by the Board during the period September 2015 to June 2016, when the Board met on eight occasions.

The report intimated that during the course of the year, members had considered many different subjects including those agreed in terms of their annual programme; annual reports by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland; a number of audit-related matters including the audit of accounts, the strategic internal audit plan, internal and external audit findings, corporate governance and risk. Members had also undertaken a training programme in terms of their audit committee role.

In addition the Board had considered a number of petitions during the course of the period covered by the report and details of the petitions received and their outcomes were provided in the appendix to the report.

In relation to the information contained within the 'outcomes' section of the appendix to the report, it was proposed that further information be provided and that the Depute Convener write to the Democratic Services Manager to advise what should be included. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board annual report, including the report on petitions received and their outcomes, be noted; and
- (b) That in relation to the information contained within the 'outcomes' of the appendix to the report, that further information be provided and that the Depute Convener write to the Democratic Services Manager to advise what should be included.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor J Sharkey having previously declared an interest in the following item, remained in the meeting.

10 REVIEW OF WARD 15 (CHILDREN'S WARD) ROYAL ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL (LEAD OFFICER COLIN GRAINGER)

Under reference to item 2 of the Minute of the meeting of the Board held on 6 June 2016, there was submitted a report by the lead officer relative to the review of Ward 15 (Children's Ward) Royal Alexandra Hospital, Paisley.

The report outlined progress in terms of taking forward the review since the Board meeting on 6 June, including additional information provided by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde on questions arising from the special meeting of the Board held on 23 May 2016; output from Renfrewshire Council's online consultation on Ward 15; and recent decisions taken by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde regarding public engagement on service changes at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Ward 15. In light of these additional developments, the report indicated that a final draft of the Board's report relative to the review would be submitted to the Board to be held on 28 November 2016.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the progress of the review be noted;
- (b) That the additional information provided by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde following their presentation to the Board in May 2016 be noted;
- (c) That the output of the online consultation be noted; and
- (d) That the decision of the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Board to agree an approach to public engagement on a series of service changes, including the review of paediatric inpatient services at the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Ward 15, be noted.

11 PETITION: TIREE AVENUE, RENFREW

Under reference to item 8c of the Minute of the meeting of the Board held on 21 September 2016 there was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the petition by Ms J Campbell that "Renfrewshire Council: agree to place

speed bumps in Tiree Avenue for the safety of local children and drivers." It was noted that the petitioner had indicated that she would not be attending the meeting and did not wish to pursue the petition further.

The report intimated that the Head of Amenity Services had advised previously that that the Council was unaware of speeding instances in Tiree Avenue, Renfrew. However any injury accidents history in the street would be investigated and a meeting with Police Scotland would be arranged to discuss the issues in detail. The Board had agreed that the petition be continued to allow a site meeting to take place to establish the extent of the problem. The site visit took place, attended by the petitioner, following which it was agreed that a driver-feedback signal be installed to monitor vehicle speeds. The feedback sign recorded average speeds of 13 mph for north-bound vehicles and 12 mph for south-bound vehicles.

It was proposed it be noted that the petitioner did not wish to pursue the petition further and that no further action be taken on the petition. This was agreed.

DECIDED: That it be noted that the petitioner did not wish to pursue the petition further and that no further action be taken on the petition.

12 PETITION: CORSEBAR ROAD, PAISLEY

Under reference to item 7 of the Minute of the meeting of the Board held on 15 February 2016 there was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the petition from Ms Dryburgh.

There was no appearance by Ms Dryburgh and it was proposed that consideration of the petition be continued to the meeting of the Board to be held on 28 November 2016. This was agreed.

DECIDED: That consideration of the petition be continued to the meeting of the Board to be held on 28 November 2016.

Prior to consideration of the following item, the Convener welcomed Ms Johnstone and Mr Porter to the meeting.

13 PETITION: SERGEANT LAW ROAD, SAFETY MEASURES

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to a petition from Ms Cheryl Johnstone in the following terms:

"The purpose of this petition is to make Sergeant Law Road at the junction of Gleniffer Braes safer for all road users by putting traffic calming measures, ie reduce speed limit, all vegetation away from sides of road to allow drivers more visibility, install mirrors at junction, and any other safety measures which may be allowed."

The report intimated that following a fatal accident on 5 July 2016 a joint site visit had been undertaken by Police Scotland and the Council's roads service. Arising from this a number of improvements had been/or were going to be taken forward by the Council on the basis of observations and recommendations made by Police Scotland.

These included reducing the speed limit from 60 mph to 40 mph; additional 'slow' markings painted on the carriageway; a new finger-post direction sign; shrubbery and grass on the verge being cut back as part of the on-going maintenance of this stretch of road; regular routine maintenance of road signs and verge shrubbery to continue and road inspectors being reminded to highlight all road signs that needed vegetation cleared to maintain visibility on an on-going basis.

The report indicated that it may be considered whether the Council had already addressed the petition by the measures outlined but that it was for the Board to determine whether they wished to hear it.

The Board agreed that it would hear the petition and then heard from Ms Johnstone, Mr Porter and from the Transportation Manager. Ms Johnstone intimated that her on-line petition had received 24,711 signatures to date.

It was proposed that the improvements which had been or were being put in place be noted; that it be recommended that the proposed reduction in the speed limit from 60 mph to 40 mph be instead to 30 mph; that it be noted that the Transportation Manager would arrange a meeting with the petitioner and Police Scotland in relation to the proposed reduction to 30 mph; and that a site visit be arranged for those members of the Board who wished to attend. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the improvements which had been or were being put in place be noted;
- (b) That it be recommended that the proposed reduction in the speed limit from 60 mph to 40 mph be instead to 30 mph;
- (c) That it be noted that the Transportation Manager would arrange a meeting with the petitioner and Police Scotland in relation to the recommended reduction to 30 mph; and
- (d) That a site visit be arranged for those members of the Board who wished to attend.

Prior to consideration of the following item, the Convener welcomed Mr Holms and Mr Hunter to the meeting.

14 PETITION: ROAD SURFACE, MORAR CRESCENT, BISHOPTON

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to a petition, containing 50 signatures, which had been received from Mr Holms in the following terms:

"The purpose of this petition is to make the Council aware of the poor condition of Morar Crescent's Bishopton, Road Surface. Council action required would be to repair and re-surface the road in Morar Crescent, Bishopton to an acceptable standard."

The report intimated that the Director of Community Resources advised that the Council at its meeting held on 3 March 2016 had agreed that the capital investment programme for the roads and footways network for financial year 2016/17 would be £3.191 million. Subsequently it was reported in the Information Bulletin on 29 April 2016 how this investment would be allocated. Morar Crescent, Bishopton was not included in the 2016/17 programme.

The Board then heard from Mr Holms, Mr Hunter and from the Transportation Manager.

It was proposed that no action be taken on the petition and that it be recommended that Morar Crescent, Bishopton be assessed using the same criteria as all other roads in Renfrewshire in terms of being included in the 2017/18 programme. This was agreed.

DECIDED: That no action be taken on the petition and that it be recommended that Morar Crescent, Bishopton be assessed using the same criteria as all other roads in Renfrewshire in terms of being included in the 2017/18 programme.

15 PETITION: TRAFFIC CONCERNS, NEWMAINS ROAD, RENFREW

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to a petition which had been received from Ms A Lang. It was noted that Ms Lang was unable to attend this meeting of the Board and had requested that consideration of her petition be continued to a future meeting.

It was proposed that consideration of the petition be continued to the meeting of the Board to be held on 28 November 2016. This was agreed.

DECIDED: That consideration of the petition be continued to the meeting of the Board to be held on 28 November 2016.