

Minute of Meeting Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 18 March 2019	10:00	Corporate Meeting Room 1, Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

Present

Councillor Bill Binks, Councillor Stephen Burns, Councillor Michelle Campbell, Councillor Neill Graham, Councillor Emma Rodden, Councillor Jim Sharkey

Chair

Councillor Bill Binks, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

S Quinn, Acting Director of Children's Services; O Reid, Head of Public Protection (Communities, Housing & Planning Services); G Hutton, Head of Operations & Infrastructure and C Grainger, Planning & Performance Manager (both Environment & Infrastructure); L McIntyre, Head of Policy & Commissioning; N Irvine-Brown, Assistant Strategic Planning & Policy Development Manager; F Hughes, Asset Manager; G Wilson, Planning & Policy Development Officer (all Chief Executive's Service); L Neary, Head of Transformation & Organisational Development; A McMahon, Chief Auditor and C MacDonald, Senior Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources).

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Order of Business

The Chair intimated that he proposed to alter the order of business to facilitate the conduct of the meeting by considering items 5 and 6 of the agenda before item 1.

1 Annual Complaints Report 2017/18

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to the annual complaints report 2016/17.

The report intimated that the Council's complaint-handling procedure ensured that the Council knew how well it was delivering its services and showed its commitment to using the issues raised in complaints to improve services. The complaints process followed that set out in guidance from the SPSO. All complaints were recorded and monitored.

It was noted that 6,098 complaints were received in 2017/18, which was a reduction from 6,364 in 2016/17; the number of complaints received in relation to the size of the local population had decreased since 2016/17 from 6.75 to 6.5 per 1000 population; 95% of the complaints were handled at the frontline stage; 75.8% of frontline complaints were closed within target timescales; 94.8% of investigation complaints were completed within target timescales; 44% of complaints received at the investigation stage were upheld compared to 36% in 2016/17; in 2017/18 48 complaints were received by the SPSO in relation to Renfrewshire out of a total of 5,029 nationally and of the 48 cases, four were investigated with three being partially upheld and one not upheld. The SPSO indicated that a low uphold rate suggested a robustness in an authority's handling of complaints.

The report also set out the stages of the complaints process and the appendix to the report detailed Renfrewshire Council's complaints performance for 2017/18 against the key SPSO performance indicators.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

2 Local Government Benchmarking Framework Indicator Profile 2017/18

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicator profile 2017/18.

The report indicated that in Scotland, local authorities had a statutory duty to achieve Best Value, the key to which was ensuring sound governance, good management, public reporting on performance and a focus on improvement.

The Council had a robust performance management framework in place, which ensured that performance was monitored rigorously by corporate and service level management teams and scrutinised by elected members through appropriate governance mechanisms. Public performance reporting was also undertaken to ensure local citizens, businesses and partner organisations were able to track Council performance levels over time.

The report provided analysis of the Council's LGBF data for 2017/18; compared the Council's performance to other councils; highlighted improvements in performance data and identified areas for further improvement. Of the 70 national indicators where current data was available, 41 of those indicators had improved since last year, 10 remained the same and 19 indicators had declined in performance. It was noted that the Council was in the top quartile for 22 of the 70 indicators with consistent performance relating to trading standards indicators and in relation to the percentage of unemployed people

assisted into work from Council-operated/funded employability programmes. The Council was also performing at a level above the national trend for several customer satisfaction levels with increases in customer satisfaction with libraries, museums and street cleansing compared to reductions in satisfaction across Scotland. The report advised that there were nine indicators where Renfrewshire was ranked in the bottom quartile however, it was noted that the Corporate Management Team and services would continue to monitor and review performance of indicators to ensure that there continued to be a high-level focus on improving performance.

Detailed information relating to the performance of similar councils which had been placed into a 'family group' with Renfrewshire Council and further context on performance across the broad service areas was contained in the appendix to the report.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

3 Training for Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Board Members

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the programme of briefings for members of the Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Board.

The report intimated that at the meeting of the Board held on 28 August 2018 it was agreed that a programme of briefings for members would be provided and would continue to form part of the agenda at every alternate meeting. A copy of the programme of briefings which concluded at the meeting was attached as an appendix to the report. The Chief Auditor advised that a suitable programme for future briefings would be developed and submitted to a future meeting for approval.

A McMahon, Chief Auditor gave a briefing to Members on the role of Internal Audit.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the timetable of briefing sessions be agreed;
- (b) That it be noted that the Chief Auditor would develop a programme of briefings for consideration by the Board; and
- (c) That the briefing provided be noted.

4 Annual Internal Audit Plan 2019/20

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the 2019/20 risk-based Annual Internal Audit Plan which had been developed in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

The Plan took account of the outcomes of the internal corporate and service risk identification and evaluation processes and the current business environment. In addition to undertaking work which would provide assurance on the robustness of key internal controls, the Plan sought to reflect the key priorities and challenges for the Council.

The report set out the methods that had been employed to facilitate production of the Plan, the influencing factors that had been considered in the assessment of the current business environment, and the priority areas of audit.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the content of the risk-based audit plan for 2019/20 be approved; and
- (b) That it be noted that the progress of the 2019/20 annual audit plan and summaries of the findings from each audit assignment would be reported to the Board on a quarterly basis.

5 Compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

It was noted that, in compliance with the code, the Director of Finance & Resources reported annually any changes to the Code that might be necessary to maintain it and ensure its effectiveness in practice. In addition, the Chief Auditor had responsibility to review independently and report to the Board annually to provide assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Code and the extent of the Council's compliance.

The report intimated that Internal Audit had reviewed the effectiveness of the revised Code which operated during 2018/19 and confirmed that the Council complied with its requirements. The Director of Finance & Resources had endorsed the Chief Auditor's recommendation that the local Code should continue to be subject to annual review to ensure that it continued to reflect developments and best practice in governance.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

6 Audit Scotland Report - Council's Use of Arms Length Organisations

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to the Audit Scotland Report on Councils' use of arms-length external organisations (ALEOs) in Scotland.

The report advised that Audit Scotland's report was intended to build on a previous report published in 2011 by the Accounts Commission which considered the reasons for using ALEOs, how councils oversaw and governed ALEOs, and what ALEOs had achieved. A copy of the report was attached as an appendix.

The governance arrangements in relation to the Council's relationship with Renfrewshire Leisure had been highlighted within the Best Value Assurance Report for Renfrewshire Council which was produced by Audit Scotland and published by the Accounts Commission in August 2017 and a recommendation had been made that the Council ensure that the relationship was clear, independent and more easily understood by the public.

The report provided a number of points for consideration by the Council as part of the ongoing review of its relationship with Renfrewshire Leisure. It was noted that this would inform work being carried out by the Head of Policy & Commissioning to enhance the level and nature of performance information which was publicly available in relation to Renfrewshire Leisure.

It was proposed that where reports for consideration by this Board introduced reports published by Audit Scotland, that Audit Scotland be invited to attend the meeting. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

(a) that the key messages contained in Audit Scotland's "Councils' use of arms-length organisations" report which was attached as an appendix be noted;

(b) That the Council's position in relation to the key messages and recommendations set out in the Audit Scotland report and as detailed within the report be noted; and

(c) That it be agreed that where reports for consideration by this Board introduced reports published by Audit Scotland, that Audit Scotland be invited to attend the meeting.

7 Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Annual Programme 2018/19

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Annual Programme 2018/19.

The report advised that lead officers had now been allocated to the four remaining reviews namely: bus deregulation and its effect on transport services; maintenance of multi-occupancy accommodation; the effectiveness of fair trade; and conversion of grassed areas to parking.

The report intimated that the reviews would now proceed with their investigations. However, it was noted that the review in relation to conversion of grassed areas to parking would not commence until August 2019.

DECIDED:

(a) That it be agreed that the reviews of: maintenance of multi-occupancy accommodation; the effectiveness of fair trade; and the conversion of grassed areas to parking commence; and

(b) That it be noted that the review in relation to conversion of grassed areas to parking commence in August 2019.