

Minute of Meeting

Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 22 May 2023	15:00	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

Present: Councillor Jennifer Adam, Councillor Andy Doig, Councillor Chris Gilmour, Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes, Councillor Robert Innes, Councillor James MacLaren, Councillor Janis McDonald, Councillor Kevin Montgomery

Chair

Councillor Andy Doig, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

A MacArthur, Director of Finance & Resources; L McIntyre, Head of Policy & Partnerships, B Walker, City Deal & Infrastructure Programme Director and L Fingland, Service Planning & Policy Development Manager (all Chief Executive's); J Calder, Head of Service (Early Years & Broad General Education) (Children's Services); L Feely, Head of Housing Services, C Dalrymple, Head of Facilities Management & Property Services and G Hutton, Head of Operations & Service Development (all Environment, Housing & Infrastructure Services); C McCourt, Head of Finance & Procurement, A McMahon, Chief Auditor, S Fanning, Principal HR & OD Adviser, J Kilpatrick, Finance Business Partner and Lead Officer, C MacDonald and E Gray, both Senior Committee Services Officers and D Cunningham, Assistant Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources); and F Burns, Head of Strategic Planning & Health Improvement (Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Partnership).

Declarations of Interest

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

Webcasting of Meeting

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Convener intimated that this meeting of the Board would be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site.

1 **Unaudited Annual Governance Statement 2022/23**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 which was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Governance Statement for 2022/23 had been prepared in accordance with the relevant regulation and guidance and took account of the Internal Audit Annual Report and Director's evaluation of the operation of the governance arrangements within each service area.

DECIDED: That it be noted that the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 would be included in the Unaudited Accounts for 2022/23.

2 **Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Annual Report on the activities of the Council's Internal Audit section.

The report intimated that the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) required that the Chief Auditor prepared a report at least annually to senior management and the Board on internal audit activity, purpose, authority and responsibility as well as performance relative to its plan. The Annual Report also provided an annual audit opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment and included details of any significant risk exposures, control issues and other matters that could be used to inform the governance statement. The Annual Report for 2022/23 was appended to the report and outlined the role of Internal Audit; its performance; the strategic and operational issues which influenced the nature of the work carried out; the key audit findings; and contained the annual audit assurance statement.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

3 **Summary of Internal Audit Reports for Period 1 January to 31 March 2023**

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 detailed the category of assurance, service, engagement and assurance rating and gave recommended risk ratings for each engagement as either critical, important, good practice or service improvement. A summary of findings was also provided in relation to final reports issued for those engagements completed during the period 1 January to 31 March 2023.

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, provide Internal Audit services to the associated bodies for which Renfrewshire Council was the lead authority and to OneRen and Renfrewshire Health & Social Care Integration Joint Board, co-ordination of the Council's Corporate Risk Management activity and management of the counter fraud, risk management and insurance team.

DECIDED: That the summary of Audit findings report for the period 1 January to 31 March 2023 be noted.

4 Internal Audit - External Quality Assessment

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the requirement in terms of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) to carry out an external quality assessment of Renfrewshire Council's Internal Audit Service.

The report advised that the PSIAS required the Chief Auditor to develop and maintain a quality assurance and improvement programme (QAIP) that covered all aspects of the internal audit activity. The external assessment of Renfrewshire Council's Internal Audit Service had been carried out by South Ayrshire's Council's Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud service utilising this framework. The review concluded that although the Internal Audit service fully conformed with the PSIAS, some recommendations were to be addressed and these were outlined in the Appendix to the report.

DECIDED:

(a) That the external assessors report on Internal Audit's conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards be noted; and

(b) That the actions to be taken to implement the recommendations as set out in the report be noted.

5 Internal Audit Charter

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the Internal Audit Charter which was attached as an appendix to the report.

The report advised that the Internal Audit Charter had been updated to take account of the recommendations arising from the External Quality Assessment to include the definition of consulting activities and the revised reporting arrangements agreed with Scotland Excel. No other changes were required to the Internal Audit Charter

DECIDED: That the revised Internal Audit Charter be approved.

6 Risk Management Annual Report 2022/23

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to corporate risk management activity which took place during 2022/23 in relation to the Council's risk management arrangements and strategic risk management objectives. A copy of the Risk Management Annual Report for 2022/23 was appended to the report.

The report intimated that in exceptionally challenging times and with diminishing resources, the Council continued to apply an appropriate level of risk management to prevent or mitigate the effects of loss or harm. In doing so, the report recognised that good risk management contributed to the delivery of better financial outcomes, business objectives, better project success rates, achievement of targets and fewer unexpected problems. An environment that was risk 'aware' rather than risk 'averse' was purposefully promoted and every effort was being made to place risk management information at the heart of the key decisions that were being made which meant that an effective approach to managing risk could be taken in a way that both addressed the significant challenges and enabled innovation.

DECIDED: That the Risk Management Annual Report 2022/23 and significant contribution that it made with regard to the Council's corporate governance arrangements be noted.

7 Risk Report May 2023

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to an update on the strategic, corporate and key service risks for May 2023.

The report advised on the latest position in managing the agreed risks for the first quarter of the year. The appendices to the report provided details of longer-term strategic and corporate risks, details of longer-term significant service risks, and a list of 'business as usual' risks.

DECIDED: That the report and the agreed risks be approved.

8 Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2021/22

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to an overview of Renfrewshire's performance in relation to the Local Government Benchmarking Framework for 2021/22, as well as outlining the wider context and trends for local authorities across Scotland. The purpose of the Framework was to support evidence-based comparisons and encourage shared learning and improvement.

The report advised that the Improvement Service published the 2021/22 Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) performance data for all Scottish local authorities in March 2023. The Framework was a high-level benchmarking tool which allowed local authorities to compare their performance across a wide range of key service areas such as education, housing, and adult social care. The report highlighted that Renfrewshire Council had participated in the development of the LGBF since its inception in 2010 and the framework had expanded to comprise 105 indicators.

The report provided an update on the impact of the pandemic on performance, and advised that the effect continued to be reflected in the 2021/22 data, which evidenced both the recovery work undertaken by councils and the challenges they continued to face. The appendix to the report outlined Renfrewshire's performance across all indicators and provided a comparison with the year prior.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

9 **Absence Statistics for Quarter 4 of 2022/23**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Council's absence statistics for the period 1 January to 31 March 2023.

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 and the overall number of days lost.

DECIDED: That the report on absence statistics for the period 1 January to 31 March 2023 be noted.

10 **Charges for Bulk Items Uplift for the Elderly - Lead Officer John Kilpatrick**

Under reference to item 5 of the Minute of the meeting of this Board held on 22 August 2022, there was submitted a report by the Lead Officer relative to an update on progress of the Board's review of bulk uplifts.

The report advised that the review was progressing well and research had continued across all areas within scope. The report looked at financial and non-financial implications in relation to the provision of free bulk uplifts for the elderly within Renfrewshire; trends in income for special uplifts from 2020/21 to 2022/23; and the latest Council Tax Reduction information was analysed for Renfrewshire.

DECIDED: That progress of the review be noted.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Board resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item 11 as it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, that if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 12 of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

11 **Summary of Internal Audit Investigation Reports for Period 1 January to 31 May 2023**

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 reported on the findings and conclusions of audit engagements to the Board. The appendix to the report provided a summary of the findings of an internal audit investigation.

DECIDED: That the summary of Audit Reports finalised during the period from 1 January to 31 May 2023 be noted.