

Minute of Meeting Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 30 November 2015	10:00	CMR 1, Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

PRESENT

Councillors B Brown, M Brown, Grady, Provost Hall, Councillors McEwan, J MacLaren, Perrie and Sharkey.

CHAIR

Councillor J Sharkey, Convener, presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

G Fitzpatrick, Management Information Officer, Lead Officer (Children's Services); T Stirling, Regulatory & Enforcement Manager, Lead Officer, M Higginbotham, Development Manager and E Lorimer, Transportation Officer (all Community Resources); A McMahon, Chief Auditor, L Belshaw, Democratic Services Manager, J Bartoletti, Records Manager, M Armstrong, Senior Human Resource Adviser and G Allison, Intern (all Finance & Resources)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sharkey declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10 of the agenda as he was a member of the KNOW (Kids Need Our Ward) campaign. He indicated that having considered the advice within the Councillors' Code of Conduct, he was satisfied that it was in order for him to take part in consideration of and voting on this item.

1 INTERNAL AUDIT AND COUNTER FRAUD PROGRESS AND PERFORMANCE - 1 JULY TO 30 SEPTEMBER, 2015

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to internal audit and counter fraud progress and performance for the period 1 July to 30 September 2015 in terms of delivery of the Audit Plan. The report compared the percentage of audit work completed against target, within time and the percentage of audit reports issued within three weeks of completion of audit field work. It was noted that performance was ahead of target in all but one area. The number of overpayments identified by the Counter Fraud Team during the period was also detailed, as was progress against local and national initiatives, including the National Fraud Initiative and the Scottish Local Authorities Chief Internal Auditors Group.

The report intimated that the 2015/16 audit plan had been approved on 30 March 2015. The plan needed to be flexible enough to deal with emerging issues and re-programming of reviews where circumstances indicated that this would be beneficial. The report detailed proposed amendments to the planned programme of work for the remainder of the year to 31 March 2016.

DECIDED:

(a) That Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Team progress and performance to 30 September 2015 be noted; and

(b) That the proposed revisions to the approved Audit Plan as detailed in the report be approved.

2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS - 1 JULY TO 30 SEPTEMBER, 2015

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the requirements 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 July to 30 September 2015.

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 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 Counter Fraud, Risk Management and Insurance teams.

DECIDED: That the summary of audit findings reported during the quarter 1 July to 30 September, 2015 be noted.

3 **SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Annual Report 2014/15. The SPSO dealt with complaints in relation to local authorities, health, Scottish Government and devolved administration, housing associations, water and further and higher education. The report highlighted that during the period covered by the report the SPSO handled 4,895 complaints leading to over 1,400 recommendations for improvement to public services. Local Government remained the sector about which the SPSO received most complaints being 38% of the SPSO's total caseload for 2014/15. During the period covered by the report the SPSO received 1,880 complaints about local government compared with 1,750 in the previous year. Complaints about the NHS had gone up by 25% over the past two years.

No complaint details for specific organisations were included in the report. Information had been received separately indicating that the number of complaints received by the SPSO during the period covered by the report relative to Renfrewshire Council was 63 compared with 52 in 2013/14 and 45 in 2012/13. No complaints against the Council had been reported to the Scottish Parliament. Details of complaints received were set out in the report and the appendix.

It was proposed that, if possible, future reports contain earlier years' statistics for comparison purposes and the outcome of complaints. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the SPSO's Annual Report for 2014/15 be noted;
- (b) That it be noted that of the 62 complaints against the Council, determined by the SPSO in 2014/15, none were the subject of a detailed report to the Scottish Parliament;
- (c) That the actions taken by Renfrewshire Council in relation to complaints handling be noted; and
- (d) That, if possible, future reports contain earlier years' statistics for comparison purposes and the outcome of complaints.

4 **SCOTTISH INFORMATION COMMISSIONER - ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Annual Report by the Scottish Information Commissioner for 2014/15.

The report intimated that the Freedom of Information Scotland Act (FOISA) came into force on 1 January 2005 and created a general right to obtain information from any designated Scottish public authority subject to limited exceptions. The Annual Report entitled 'Information for All' explored the performance of the office of the Scottish Information Commissioner across the year and how FOISA could support openness and transparency within Scotland. The report outlined the key highlights of the Commissioner's report. It was noted that in 2014/15 Renfrewshire Council had three valid appeals determined by the Commissioner, the outcomes of which were detailed. The report also referred to the introduction of self-assessment modules.

It was noted that Renfrewshire had received 823 freedom of information requests in 2013/14 and 1,040 in 2014/15, an increase of 26.4% and 24 requirements for review compared to 18 in the previous year. The low level of requirements for review compared to the high volume of requests processed by the Council, together with only three appeals to the Commissioner during 2014/15 indicated that the Council was managing well its responsibilities and the challenges of freedom of information.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

5 COMMISSIONER FOR ETHICAL STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE IN SCOTLAND ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Annual Report by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. The report detailed the work of the Commissioner during the year, provided details of the investigation of complaints dealt with in relation to councillors, members of devolved public bodies and MSPs. The report imitated that nationally the number of complaints received was high which led to a significant increase in the number of breaches reported to the Standards Commission. Again nationally, complaints relating to registering and declaring interests, misconduct on individual planning applications and disrespect of councillors/officials/employees continued to be the most significant categories of complaint. No specific figures for Renfrewshire Council were included in the report. However, information had been received separately indicating that during the period covered by the report 10 complaints had been received (resulting in six cases as two were multiple complaints) against Renfrewshire councillors compared with 11 in 2013/14 and three in 2012/13. The report outlined the practice in Renfrewshire including training provided and reminders issued in relation to registration of interests.

DECIDED:

(a) That the 2014/15 Annual Report by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland report be noted; and

(b) That the actions taken in relation to the Code of Conduct and members' training and development as detailed in the report be noted.

6 ABSENCE STATISTICS

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Council's absence statistics for the period 24 March to 22 June 2015. 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 was also included in the report. In addition, information was provided on managing absence activity levels by service and the costs of sick pay. The overall number of days lost during the quarter and for the equivalent quarter in the previous year were shown.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

Prior to consideration of the following item, the Convener welcomed Mr Haraburda, principal petitioner, and Ms Lozinska, supporter, to the meeting.

7 PETITION: ROAD SAFETY, SHORTROODS ROAD, PAISLEY

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to a petition which had been received in the undernoted terms:

“Install speed bumps on Shortroods Road. Residents at Shortroods Road (between Springbank Road and Fullerton Street) some reckless drivers are putting lives at risk as well as causing a noise nuisance. Now the residents have handed over a petition with 15 signatures to Renfrewshire Council Paisley, asking for speed bumps to be put in.”

Mr Haraburda had also submitted a letter providing further supporting information and a map and these were appended to the report.

The report intimated that the Head of Amenity Services had intimated that this area of Paisley had been redeveloped recently with new housing and roads infrastructure. The new roads infrastructure included speed humps and raised junctions throughout the development. There was a speed hump on Shortroods Road and then a series of raised junctions all of which had a red textured surface and new warning triangles. The road was also a bus route which would normally have speed cushions but in this instance had full width humps. Existing traffic calming was well-designed and relatively new and there were no plans to alter this.

The Board heard from Mr Haraburda and Ms Lozinska in support of the petition and from the Development Manager.

It was proposed that it be recommended to the Director of Community Resources that an un-illuminated driver feedback signal be installed to determine driver behaviour at the location; that a site visit be arranged for those members of the Board who wished to attend; and that the outcome be reported to a future meeting of the Board at which consideration of the petition would be resumed. This was agreed.

DECIDED: That it be recommended to the Director of Community Resources that an un-illuminated driver feedback signal be installed to determine driver behaviour at the location; that a site visit be arranged for those members of the Board who wished to attend; and that the outcome be reported to a future meeting of the Board at which consideration of the petition would be resumed.

8 PETITION: HAMILTON COURT, PAISLEY

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to a petition received in relation to Hamilton Court, Paisley. The Convener intimated that the principal petitioner had advised that the petition was not to be progressed further and had been withdrawn.

DECIDED: That it be noted that the petition had been withdrawn.

Prior to consideration of the following item, the Convener welcomed Ms Dryburgh, principal petitioner, to the meeting.

9 PETITION, CORSEBAR ROAD, PAISLEY, PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to a petition, comprising around 70 signatures, which had been received from George Adam MSP, on behalf of Ms Dryburgh in the undernoted terms:

“As I have become visually impaired and can no longer drive I have to access buses and also have to frequently attend clinics at the RAH. Trying to cross Corsebar Road is very difficult and dangerous, even for people who are elderly or disabled. I think there is an urgent need for a pedestrian crossing or even just a central island near the entrance to the RAH driveway”.

The report intimated that the Head of Amenity Services had indicated that a request had been received in 2013 for pedestrian facilities in Corsebar Road which resulted in a vehicle and pedestrian survey. Unfortunately the results of the survey did not justify any pedestrian facilities and no further action was taken. As a result of the RAH parking policy Renfrewshire Council had promoted a Traffic Regulation Order to restrict parking on Craw Road and Ricartsbar Avenue. The Council was currently looking at restrictions for Corsebar Road near to the entrance to the hospital.

The Board then heard from Ms Dryburgh in support of her petition and from the Development Manager and Transportation Officer.

It was proposed that it be recommended to the Director of Community Resources that a further vehicle and pedestrian survey be undertaken; that a site visit be arranged for those members of the Board who wished to attend; and that the outcome be reported to a future meeting of the Board at which consideration of the petition would be resumed. This was agreed.

DECIDED: That it be recommended to the Director of Community Resources that a further vehicle and pedestrian survey be undertaken; that a site visit be arranged for those members of the Board who wished to attend; and that the outcome be reported to a future meeting of the Board at which consideration of the petition would be resumed.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Sharkey having previously declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item, remained in the meeting during its consideration.

10 WARD 15 (CHILDREN'S WARD) ROYAL ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL (LEAD OFFICER GAYLE FITZPATRICK)

There was submitted a report by the Lead Officer relative to the proposed purpose, scope, and terms of reference of the review and those who would be invited to attend. The report intimated that the purpose of the review would be to provide an informed, evidenced-based Council view of any consultation by NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board (NHSGG&C) regarding the future of Ward 15.

The report intimated that the RAH served a population of around 200,000 from a mix of rural and urban areas. Ward 15 was a children's ward consisting of 28 bed spaces. This was the only remaining acute in-patient facility for children in NHS GG&C outwith the children's facility at the new Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Govan, Glasgow.

The report outlined how major changes to services were carried out by health boards and the outcome of a previous consultation which had been undertaken in 2011 on the future of Ward 15.

It was proposed that, in addition to the witnesses suggested in the report, Renfrewshire families using the new Queen Elizabeth University Hospital be asked to provide evidence. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the purpose and scope of the review be approved;
- (b) That the provisional timescale as outlined in the appendix to the report be approved;
- (c) That powers be delegated to the Lead Officer in consultation with the Convener to alter the timetable having regard to the availability of evidence and witnesses throughout the course of the review;
- (d) That the Lead Officer be authorised to contact any organisations recommended by the Board who might have information useful to the Board and who might be potential witnesses;
- (e) That the Lead Officer be authorised to make the necessary arrangements to progress the review within the agreed timescales; and
- (f) That, in addition to the witnesses suggested in the report, Renfrewshire families using the new Queen Elizabeth University Hospital be asked to provide evidence.

11 BUS DE-REGULATION AND ITS EFFECT ON TRANSPORT SERVICES IN RENFREWSHIRE (LEAD OFFICER THOMAS STIRLING)

There was submitted a report by the Lead Officer relative to the proposed purpose, scope and terms of reference of the review and those who would be invited to attend.

The report intimated that the purpose of the review would be to evaluate the effectiveness of the current system of providing bus services to the travelling public in Renfrewshire and to consider the potential outcomes of proposed changes to legislation or other options that emerged as part of the review. The report provided details on the Renfrewshire picture in terms of the percentage of households with access to a car; use by Renfrewshire residents of buses to travel to work; areas of concern including connecting residents who lived in areas of high deprivation to services and to employment opportunities as well as providing support to the growing older population and improving links to small towns and rural areas. It was noted that 93% of bus services in Renfrewshire operated on a commercial basis, and were provided predominately by McGills, with a small number of services operated by First Bus. Where there were gaps, SPT provided services including 16 supported local bus services and four 'MyBus' Services.

It was proposed that, in addition to the witnesses suggested in the report, Lothian Buses, the National Bus Stakeholders Group and representatives from the Scottish Youth Parliament/Youth Voice be asked to provide evidence. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the purpose and scope of the review be approved;
- (b) That the provisional timetable as outlined in the Appendix to the report be approved;
- (c) That powers be delegated to the Lead Officer in consultation with the Convener to alter the timetable having regard to the availability of evidence and witnesses throughout the course of the review;
- (d) That the Lead Officer be authorised to contact any organisations recommended by the Board who might have information useful to the Board and who might be potential witnesses;
- (e) That the Lead Officer be authorised to make the necessary arrangements to progress the review within the agreed timescales; and
- (f) That, in addition to the witnesses suggested in the report, Lothian Buses, the National Bus Stakeholders Group and representatives from the Scottish Youth Parliament/Youth Voice be asked to provide evidence.