

Minute of Meeting Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 20 March 2017	10:00	CMR 1, Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

Present: Councillor Derek Bibby, Councillor Maria Brown, Councillor John Caldwell, Councillor Margaret Devine, Provost Anne Hall, Councillor James MacLaren, Councillor Cathy McEwan, Councillor Jim Sharkey

Chair

Councillor J Sharkey, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

L McIntyre, Strategic Planning and Policy Development Manager, N Irvine-Brown, Assistant Strategic Planning & Policy Development Manager and G Wilson, Planning and Policy Development Officer (all Chief Executive's); S Quinn, Assistant Director Schools (Children's Services); C Grainger, Service Planning and Policy Development Manager, G Hannah, Strategic Change Manager and M Higginbotham, Development Manager (all Community Resources); and L Belshaw, Democratic Services Manager and A McMahon, Chief Auditor (both Finance & Resources).

Apologies

Councillor Perrie.

Declarations of Interest

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

1 Local Government Benchmarking Framework Annual Indicator Profile

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicator profile 2015/16.

The report intimated 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 by corporate and service level management teams and scrutinised by elected members. The report set out the mechanisms by which the monitoring of Council services was undertaken.

The report highlighted that scrutiny of performance was also undertaken through the LGBF which brought together performance indicators covering information about a wide range of key services such as education, housing and adult social care. The main purpose of the framework was to allow councils to work and learn together to improve services based on their comparative service information. The report provided key messages for the Council from the 2015/16 indicator profile against each of 68 indicators, including information relating to the performance of similar councils who had been placed into 'family groups' with Renfrewshire.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

2 Annual Internal Audit Plan 2017/18

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the annual internal audit plan. The report intimated that in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, a risk-based audit plan for 2017/18 had been developed. The audit plan took into account 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.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the content of the risk-based audit plan for 2017/18 be approved; and
- (b) That it be noted that progress of the 2017/18 annual audit plan and summaries of the findings from each audit assignment would be reported to the Board on a quarterly basis.

3 Compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to the annual review of the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's local code of corporate governance.

The report intimated that based on internal audit's sample check of the evidence used to demonstrate compliance, the Council complied with the requirements of the local code. In addition, the report intimated that it was evident that the local code had been

subject to review and updating in line with developments and best practise and any revised Council policies.

The report noted that the Director of Finance & Resources had endorsed the Chief Auditor's recommendation that the local code should continue to be the subject of an annual review to ensure that it continued to reflect developments in best practice in governance.

DECIDED: That the report 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 that an external assessment of internal audit be conducted at least once every five years.

The report intimated that in March 2014, the Board had approved internal audit's participation in the peer review validated self-assessment framework developed by the Scottish Local Authorities Chief Internal Auditors' Group. The external quality assessment was undertaken by West Lothian Council, the overall conclusion of which was that Renfrewshire Council's Internal Audit function was a well-managed and effective audit service. An action plan had been developed which identified four areas for improvement, including the level of information provided to the Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board. The Chief Auditor would benchmark with other local authorities and discuss options for future reporting arrangements.

DECIDED:

(a) That the external assessor's report on internal audit's compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards be noted; and

(b) That the actions to be taken to implement the recommendations made be noted.

5 A Review of Housing Benefit Fraud Investigation Liaison Arrangements in Scotland

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to Audit Scotland's report on its review of housing benefit fraud investigation liaison arrangements in Scotland, published in December 2016 and appended to the report.

The report intimated that responsibility for housing benefit counter fraud work transferred from local authorities to the Department for Work & Pension's (DWP) Fraud and Error Service, with Renfrewshire Council being the last authority to transfer in March 2016. The prevention, detection and investigation of fraudulent housing benefit claims were important aspects of a secure and effective benefit service. Counter-fraud activities helped to protect public funds by ensuring that fraudulent claims were identified and sanctions were applied where appropriate. The report provided findings from a review of the efficiency of the arrangements between local authorities and the DWP.

DECIDED: That the Audit Scotland report and the actions the Council intended to pursue in response to the recommendations made be noted.

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

6 Petition: Corsebar Road, Paisley, Pedestrian Crossing

Under reference to item 11 of the Minute of the meeting of the Board held on 28 November 2016, there was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the petition submitted by Ms Dryburgh that “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 petition had first been considered by the Board at its meeting held on 30 November 2015 and then subsequently at meetings held on 15 February and 28 November 2016. At the meeting held on 28 November 2016, the Board agreed that the petition be continued further and that the Transportation Manager liaise with the Royal Alexandra Hospital (RAH) in relation to their views on a pedestrian crossing on Corsebar Road. It was also agreed that the Board be provided with details of the injury record at the site and what would justify an intervention. The Transportation Manager had contacted the RAH who advised that they were not aware of any requests or any need for a crossing point at this location as bus services provided access to the main entrance of the hospital building. He further advised that there had been three slight accidents which were not near to the site referred to in the petition, no pedestrians had been involved and none of these accidents would have been preventable if a crossing point was available at the hospital.

The Board then heard from Ms Dryburgh and from the Development Manager.

Councillor J Sharkey, seconded by Councillor M Devine, moved that no further action be taken in relation to the petition.

Councillor McEwan, seconded by Councillor M Brown, moved as an amendment, that the petition be continued for further information.

On the roll being called the following members voted for the amendment: Councillors M Brown and McEwan.

The following members voted for the motion: Councillors Bibby, Caldwell, M Devine, Provost Hall, Councillors J MacLaren and J Sharkey.

2 members having voted for the amendment and 6 members having voted for the motion, the motion was accordingly declared carried.

It was then proposed that the Convener write to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport in relation to why the routes of some bus services did not include the hospital. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That no further action be taken in relation to the petition; and

(b) That the Convener write to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport in relation to why the routes of some bus services did not include the hospital.

7 Petition: Barrhead Road, Paisley, Bus Stop/Shelter

Under reference to item 7 of the meeting of the Board held on 13 February 2017, there was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the petition by Ms Jessie McEwan “To reinstate the bus stop and shelter on Barrhead Road, adjacent to Barscube Terrace – because of concerns and issues of access for those disabled and elderly passengers.”

The report intimated that the petition had been considered by the Board at meetings held on 28 November 2016 and 13 February 2017. At the meeting on 13 February 2017 it had been agreed that the petition be continued for a site visit. The site visit took place on 2 March 2017.

Ms McEwan was not in attendance or represented at the meeting. The Board heard from the Development Manager.

It was proposed that no further action be taken in relation to the petition and that a letter be sent to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport requesting that the bus shelter be removed as soon as it was contractually possible to do so. This was agreed.

DECIDED: That no further action be taken in relation to the petition and that a letter be sent to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport requesting that the bus shelter be removed as soon as it was contractually possible to do so.

8 Petition: The Wickets, Paisley

Under reference to item 14 of the Minute of the meeting of the Board held on 28 November 2016, there was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the petition by Mr Joseph Jackson, Chairperson, on behalf of the Wickets Residents Association “Speeding by some drivers through the Wickets estate is persistent. The Association committee over the last 4 years has striven to address the issues, but to little effect. The Committee wish Renfrewshire Council to approve 3 sets of speed bumps within the estate.”

The report intimated that the Board at its meeting held on 28 November 2016 had continued consideration of the petition in order that the Transportation Manager could undertake further discussions with the petitioners and to allow a site visit to take place. The Transportation Manager had advised that a site meeting had been held with Police Scotland who advised that the development had been constructed in such a way that the road network made speeding very difficult. No further measures were proposed for this estate. However, the Police would follow up details of the vehicle(s) which residents considered to be breaking the speed limit.

Mr Jackson was not in attendance or represented at the meeting. The Board heard from the Development Manager.

It was proposed that no further action be taken in relation to the petition. This was agreed.

DECIDED: That no further action be taken in relation to the petition.

