

Minute of Meeting Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 24 January 2022	10:00	Remotely via Microsoft Teams,

Present: Councillor Tom Begg, Councillor Bill Binks, Councillor Stephen Burns, Councillor Michelle Campbell, Councillor Jim Harte, Councillor John Hood, Councillor Emma Rodden, Councillor Jim Sharkey, Councillor Jane Strang

Chair

Councillor Bill Binks, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

D Christie, Senior Communications Officer (Chief Executive's); K Waters, Programme Manager and Lead Officer (Communities, Housing & Planning); D Kerr, Service Co-ordination Manager and L Rennie, Operations Manager (both Environment & Infrastructure); M Boyd, Head of People and OD, C McCourt, Finance Business Partner, K Campbell, Assistant Chief Auditor, K Locke, Risk Manager; S Fanning, Principal HR & OD Adviser, D Pole, End User Technician, E Gray, P Shiach and C MacDonald, all Senior Committee Services Officers and D Cunningham, Assistant Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources).

Also in Attendance

M Ferris, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

Webcasting of Meeting

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

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Sharkey declared an interest in respect of Item 1 - Summary of Internal Audit Reports for period 1 October to 31 December 2021 - as he had relatives in Renfrewshire's cemeteries.

1 Summary of Internal Audit Reports for period 1 October to 31 December 2021

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 October to 31 December 2021.

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 One Leisure 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 October to 31 December 2021 be noted.

2 Risk Report 2021/22, Jan 2022 Update

There was submitted a report by the Acting Director of Finance & Resources relative to an update on the strategic, corporate and key service risks for 2021/2022.

The report advised on the latest position in managing the agreed risks for the final quarter of the year. The appendices provided details of longer-term strategic and corporate risks as at 15 December 2021, details of longer-term significant service risks as at 15 December 2021 and a list of 'business as usual' risks.

DECIDED: That the progress being made by Council in managing the risks identified be noted.

3 **Absence Statistics - Quarter 2 & Quarter 3 2020/21**

There was submitted a report by the Acting Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Council's absence statistics for quarter 2 ending 30 September 2021 and for quarter 3 ending 31 December 2021.

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 quarter 2 ending 30 September 2021 and for quarter 3 ending 31 December 2021 be noted.

4 **Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland - Annual Report 2020/21**

There was submitted a report by the Acting Director of Finance & Resources relative to the annual report by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland.

The report provided details of the investigation of complaints about the conduct of councillors, members of devolved public bodies and MSPs and scrutiny of Scotland's Ministerial public appointments process.

It was noted that a new Acting Commissioner for Ethical Standards had taken over in April 2021 and was faced with significant activity during a particularly challenging period due to staff movement and restructure. A revised 2020/24 strategic plan was published and the Code of Conduct was reviewed in order to bring it up to date, make the Code easier to understand, and to take into account developments in society such as the increased use of social media.

Nationally during 2020/21 the Commissioner received 238 complaints compared with 284 in 2019/20. The subject matter of the complaints was detailed in the report, however, it was highlighted that the largest category of complaints related to disrespect toward employees/public.

No specific figures relative to Renfrewshire Council were included in the Commissioner's report. However, information had been received separately from the Commissioner that, during the period covered by the report five complaints had been received compared with five in 2019/20 and three in 2018/19. Of the five complaints received three of these were about disrespect to the public/council officers, one related to a declaration of interest and one concerned disrespect towards councillors. Four of the complaints were dismissed at the admissibility stage and did not progress to investigation. One of the complaints progressed to investigation where the Commissioner found the Councillor in breach of the Code of Conduct and referred the case to the Standards Commission for Scotland.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the 2020/21 annual report by the Commission for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland be noted; and
- (b) That the actions taken in Renfrewshire in relation to the Code of Conduct and members' development opportunities be noted.

5 Linking the National Cycle Route 7 with Howwood - Lead Officer Kevin Waters

Under reference to Item 7 – Audit, Risk & Scrutiny Annual Programme 2021/22 – Request for Review of the Minute of the meeting of this Board held on 15 November 2020, there was submitted a report by the Lead Officer relative to the proposed purpose, scope and terms of reference and witnesses to be called for the review of linking the national cycle route 7 with Howwood.

The report advised that the key purpose of the review was to understand what motivated people to use, and the demand for, walking and cycling from the National Cycle Route 7 at Lochwinnoch to and from Howwood; set out the current provision for walking and cycling from the National Cycle Route 7 at Lochwinnoch to and from Howwood; and identify any other mitigation that could be recommended which the Council could pursue within available resources.

A copy of the proposed timetable was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the purpose and scope of the review be approved;
- (b) That the provisional timescale as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report be approved;
- (c) That the Lead Officer be authorised to contact any organisations recommended by the Board who may have information useful to the Board and who may be potential witnesses;
- (d) 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;
- (e) That the Lead Officer be authorised to make the necessary arrangements to progress the review within the agreed timescales.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Board resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Item 6 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 1 of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

6 **Summary of Internal Audit Investigation Reports for period 1 October to 31 December 2021**

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 four internal audit investigations.

DECIDED: That the summary of Audit Reports finalised during the period from 1 October to 31 December 2021 be noted.