

Minute of Meeting

Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Board

Date	Time	Venue
Monday, 25 October 2021	10:00	Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN

Present: Councillor Tom Begg, Councillor Bill Binks, Councillor Stephen Burns, Councillor John Hood, Councillor Jim Sharkey, Councillor Jane Strang

Chair

Councillor Bill Binks, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

L McIntyre, Head of Policy & Commissioning (Chief Executive's); J Mackie, Placement Team Leader and Lead Officer, (Communities & Housing Services); A McMahon, Chief Auditor, K Campbell, Assistant Chief Auditor, D Pole and B Dalziel (both End User Technicians), E Gray, P Shiach and C MacDonald, all Senior Committee Services Officers and K O'Neill, Assistant Democratic Services Officer (all Finance & Resources).

Also in Attendance

M Ferris, Audit Scotland.

Recording of Meeting

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Convener intimated that this meeting of the Board would be webcast live on the Council's website.

Thereafter the Clerk undertook a roll call of members in attendance at the meeting, indicating those in the Council Chamber and those participating remotely.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Sharkey declared a non-financial interest in respect of Item 4 - Review of Bus Deregulation and Effect on Transport Services in Renfrewshire, as he was currently in dispute with McGill's Bus Company and intimated that it was his intention to remain in the meeting and to take part in any discussion or voting thereon.

Councillor Hood declared a non-financial interest in respect of Item 4 - Review of Bus Deregulation and Effect on Transport Services in Renfrewshire, as he was currently in dispute with McGill's Bus Company and intimated that it was his intention to remain in the meeting and to take part in any discussion or voting thereon.

1 Summary of Internal Audit Reports for period 01 July to 30 September 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 July to 30 September 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 Renfrewshire 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 July to 30 September 2021 be noted.

2 Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Progress and Performance for Period 1 July to 20 September 2021

There was submitted a report by the Chief Auditor relative to Internal Audit and Counter Fraud performance between 1 April and 30 September 2021 in terms of the delivery of the Audit Plan for the year and outlining actual performance against targets set by the Director of Finance & Resources.

No formal performance targets for fraud investigation had been established as a major part of the team's work involved being the single point of contact for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Single Fraud Investigation Service and the Service Level Agreement for the work contained time targets for completing this work. It was noted that the focus over the last year had been on increasing fraud awareness amongst employees to prevent fraud from occurring against the Council. The types of

fraud referrals received to date were wide-ranging and the team's objective was to concentrate on investigating those referrals considered to contain the greatest fraud risk.

The report also detailed the progress made against local and national initiatives involving Internal Audit and the Counter Fraud Team in the period.

The report advised that as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic joint working with the DWP's Single Fraud Investigation service had ceased and they had now been informed that some of the fraud work had recommenced. All of the Counter Fraud Team were currently working at home although any necessary site/home visits had recommenced.

It was noted that the Internal Audit team also worked from home full-time and were continuing to work on planned audit assignments. The Team also provided advice and support where necessary to Council services.

DECIDED: That the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Team progress and performance from 1 April to 30 June 2021 be noted.

3 **2020/21 Complaints Handling Performance**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive relative to the annual complaints report 2020/21.

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. Full implementation of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) guidance commenced within the Council from 1 March 2013 which introduced quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution.

The report provided information on complaints closed during the year from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and performance on key indicators and highlighted improvements made to the complaints handling procedure over the past year to ensure that complaints were handled well, and the organisation learned from them and improved services

It was noted that 2020/21 had been a year of unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with no service being untouched by changes to service delivery and with a range of new services which required to be delivered in response to restrictions in place. It was recognised by the SPSO and Councils that the pandemic also had an impact on complaints handling, as many staff who were responsible for complaints handling were redeployed to critical response work, or provided advice on new services, grants or support available. Despite the significant challenges of the pandemic, services continued to strive to resolve complaints and support customers throughout the process, as a result performance for complaints handling had remained comparatively stable over 2020/21.

The SPSO introduced changes to the national complaints handling process in 2019. Local authorities were required to introduce these changes by April 2021. The key changes to the statutory model were set out within the report; and a new system to support the logging of and learning from complaints was launched by the Council in April 2020.

A performance scorecard was included within the appendix to the report to provide additional data. It was noted that the performance indicators that had declined in performance for 2020/21 would be further explored and monitored, working closely with services to identify where additional support and guidance was required.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

Declaration of Interest

Councillors Hood and Sharkey, having previously declared an interest in the following item of business remained in the meeting.

4 Review of Bus Deregulation and Effect on Transport Services in Renfrewshire - Lead Officer Jamie Mackie

Under reference to Item 8 - Bus Deregulation and the Effect on Transport Services in Renfrewshire - of the Minute of the meeting of this Board held on 24 August 2020, there was submitted a report by the Lead Officer relative to an update on the review of bus deregulation and the effect on transport services in Renfrewshire.

The report updated the Board on the operation of bus services during the pandemic and the early stages of recovery, developments over this period and progress in relation to the bus service provisions of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

It was proposed that the Lead Officer write to the witnesses who had previously submitted evidence to afford them the opportunity of updating their evidence. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the information presented at this stage of the review be noted;
- (b) That the next stage of the review be noted; and
- (c) That the Lead Officer write to the witnesses who had previously submitted evidence to afford them the opportunity of updating their evidence.

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.

5 **Summary of Internal Audit Investigation Reports for period 01 July to 30 September 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 July to 30 September 2021 be noted.