

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 27 June 2023

Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX

PRESENT

Mr Ivan Augustus, Councillor Peter Bloomfield, Councillor Theresa Coull, Councillor John Cowe, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Amber Dunbar, Councillor Jérémie Fernandes, Councillor Donald Gatt, Councillor David Gordon, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Neil McLennan, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor John Stuart, Ms Margaret Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE

The Chief Executive, Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance, Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Audit and Risk Manager, Atholl Scott, Business Continuity and Risk Management Officer, Lindsey Robinson, Committee Services Officer as clerk to the meeting, all Moray Council and Andrew Wallace, Grant Thornton - External Auditor.

1. Chair

Councillor Graham Leadbitter, as Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee, chaired the meeting.

2. Welcome

The Committee joined the Chair in welcoming Ivan Augustus to his first meeting since joining the Committee as an external member.

3. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 21 and 23 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, the Committee noted the following declarations:

Councillors Morrison, Divers, Gatt, Keith and Bloomfield all declared that they were either members or substitute members of the Moray Integration Joint Board.

Councillor Gatt declared that he was the Convenor of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board.

There were no further declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

4. Minute of the meeting held 10 May 2023

The minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee dated 10 May 2023 was submitted and approved.

Councillor McLennan raised a point of accuracy with regards to the wording of item 6 “Internal Audit Section Completed Projects” He was of the opinion that the comments made by the Chair for members to be mindful of their language should have been added.

The clerk agreed to look back at the webcast and add in the information.

5. Written Questions **

The Committee noted that no written questions had been submitted.

6. Annual Governance Statement

The meeting had before it a report by the Chief Executive providing the Committee with a copy of the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 for information and review.

During consideration Councillor Gordon sought clarification on item 5 on page 16 of the appendix to the statement asking whether it would be relevant to add in the interaction between CMT and the administration in terms of capability of leadership and the individuals.

In response the Business Continuity and Risk Management Officer agreed to add it in to the report.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed unanimously to note the content of the Annual Governance Statement provided at Appendix 1.

7. Internal Audit Annual Report- 2022-23

The meeting had before it a report by the Audit and Risk Manager providing the Committee with a copy of the Internal Audit Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2023, together with the Audit and Risk Manager's opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control.

Following consideration the Committee agreed unanimously to note the contents of the annual report provided at Appendix 1.

8. Internal Audit Section Completed Projects Report

The meeting had before it a report by the Audit and Risk Manager advising the Committee on the work of the Internal Audit Section for the period from 11 May 2023 to 27 June 2023.

During consideration of the report, Ms Wilson sought clarification on Appendix 1 "Emergency Planning", and whether, in section 5.03, Chief Executive or CMT could be added in to the sentence "However this process requires commitment from the heads of services.."

In response the Chief Executive agreed that this could be added.

Councillor Gordon enquired as to whether the Members could get sight of the current emergency planning flood action plan.

The Head of Environmental and Commercial Services agreed to circulate this.

Councillor Macrae sought clarification on the weekly Moray Emergency response Co-ordinator (MERC) rota which had previously been available to Members and whether this could be reinstated.

In response the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services advised that it was not a decision that could be made immediately as there were options to consider and agreed to come back to the Committee with a report into options for this or something similar.

The Chief Executive offered to provide a briefing to all Members of the Council on Emergency Planning and the role of elected members.

The Chair agreed that a briefing would be useful.

Councillor Stuart sought clarification on the timescales mentioned in Appendix 2 "Self Directed Support", and he was of the opinion that there was a "back to basics" approach.

In response the Audit and Risk Manager advised that the approach would be a question for the service and the timescales were provided by the service.

The Chair agreed to raise this with the MIJB Chief Officer and for IJB members to take it back to the next meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed unanimously to note the contents of the report and to a briefing on Emergency Planning.

9. Question Time ***

Role of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Ms Wilson sought clarification on the possible extension of the role of the Committee and what areas would it cover.

In response the Chair advised that there had been discussions and that there were various areas under consideration after the committee description was agreed earlier in the year.

The Chair further advised that he plans to have regular meetings with the Chairs of the service committees regarding the role of scrutiny and he is looking for these to start after recess.

The Audit and Risk Manager advised that he would be holding a briefing for members on the CIPFA Publication – Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities 2022 Edition, which will also require an annual evaluation and assessment by the committee. He has also been working with the Organisational Development team to design a questionnaire for members to look at additional training requirements.

The Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance advised that there had recently been a briefing session on scrutiny but that there may be room for further training, but he was unsure as to whether the external members could attend.

Councillor Divers sought clarification on the attendance of Heads of Service at the Committee, and mentioned that in the past it was the committee Chairs who were

present but most were members of this committee so he was of the opinion that the Heads of Service should attend to answer any questions Members of this committee may have.

The Chair advised that he would raise it off the table with the MIJB Chief Officer.

The Chief Executive confirmed that it should be the committee Chairs who were present and the requirement for the Heads of Service to attend would need further discussion.

The Chair further advised that the Chair of the MIJB rotates so it not always Moray Council so attendance could be a problem.