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## Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 16 June 2021

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that a Meeting of the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee** is to be held at **remote locations via video conference**, on **Wednesday, 16 June 2021** at **09:30**.

### BUSINESS

1. **Sederunt**
2. **Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests \***
3. **Minute of Meeting of 24 February 2021** 5 - 8
4. **Written Questions \*\***
5. **Internal Audit - Annual Report 2020-21** 9 - 18  
Report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development)
6. **Work of the Internal Audit Section - Update** 19 - 30  
Report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development)
7. **Internal Audit Plan - Year Ending 31 March 2022** 31 - 42  
Report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development)
8. **Accounts Commission Report - Local Government in Scotland - Overview 2021** 43 - 46  
Report by the Chief Executive
9. **Question Time \*\*\***  
Consider any oral question on matters delegated to the Committee in terms of the Council's Scheme of Administration.

## **Summary of Audit and Scrutiny Committee functions:**

**Audit Functions** - Consider reports from the Council's internal auditor & Audit Scotland concerning Council Functions.

**Scrutiny Functions** - Scrutinising the policies of the Council and their effectiveness in meeting the action plans of the Council as set out in the Corporate Development Plan and evaluating the actions of Committees in implementing the action plans set out in the Corporate Development Plan.

**Performance Monitoring** - To receive reports on the performance of and trends within all of the Council's services in terms of service standards and performance information.

**Standards** - To ensure that the highest standards of probity and public accountability are demonstrated.

**Moray Council Committee meetings are currently being held virtually due to Covid-19. If you wish to watch the webcast of the meeting please go to:**

**[http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_43661.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_43661.html)**  
**to watch the meeting live.**

## GUIDANCE NOTES

\* **Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests** - The Chair of the meeting shall seek declarations from any individual or political group at the beginning of a meeting whether any prior decision has been reached on how the individual or members of the group will vote on any item(s) of business on the Agenda, and if so on which item(s). A prior decision shall be one that the individual or the group deems to be mandatory on the individual or the group members such that the individual or the group members will be subject to sanctions should they not vote in accordance with the prior decision. Any such prior decisions will be recorded in the Minute of the meeting.

\*\* **Written Questions** - Any Member can put one written question about any relevant and competent business within the specified remits not already on the agenda, to the Chair provided it is received by the Proper Officer or Committee Services by 12 noon two working days prior to the day of the meeting. A copy of any written answer provided by the Chair will be tabled at the start of the relevant section of the meeting. The Member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter, but no discussion will be allowed.

No supplementary question can be put or answered more than 10 minutes after the Council has started on the relevant item of business, except with the consent of the Chair. If a Member does not have the opportunity to put a supplementary question because no time remains, then he or she can submit it in writing to the Proper Officer who will arrange for a written answer to be provided within 7 working days.

\*\*\* **Question Time** - At each ordinary meeting of the Committee ten minutes will be allowed for Members questions when any Member of the Committee can put a question to the Chair on any business within the remit of that Section of the Committee. The Member who has put the question may, after the answer has been given, ask one supplementary question directly related to the subject matter, but no discussion will be allowed.

No supplementary question can be put or answered more than ten minutes after the Committee has started on the relevant item of business, except with the consent of the Chair. If a Member does not have the opportunity to put a supplementary question because no time remains, then he/she can submit it in writing to the proper officer who will arrange for a written answer to be provided within seven working days.

**THE MORAY COUNCIL**  
**Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

**SEDERUNT**

Councillor Donald Gatt (Chair)  
Councillor Derek Ross (Depute Chair)

Councillor George Alexander (Member)  
Councillor Frank Brown (Member)  
Councillor John Cowe (Member)  
Councillor John Divers (Member)  
Councillor Tim Eagle (Member)  
Councillor Graham Leadbitter (Member)  
Councillor Marc Macrae (Member)  
Councillor Aaron McLean (Member)  
Councillor Maria McLean (Member)  
Councillor Shona Morrison (Member)  
Councillor Sonya Warren (Member)  
Councillor Walter Wilson (Member)

Clerk Name:	Tracey Sutherland
Clerk Telephone:	07971 879268
Clerk Email:	tracey.sutherland@moray.gov.uk

**Minute of Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

**Wednesday, 24 February 2021**

**remote locations via video-conference,**

**PRESENT**

Councillor George Alexander, Councillor Frank Brown, Councillor John Cowe, Councillor John Divers, Councillor Tim Eagle, Councillor Donald Gatt, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Aaron McLean, Councillor Maria McLean, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Derek Ross, Councillor Walter Wilson

**APOLOGIES**

Councillor Sonya Warren

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Also in attendance at the above meeting were the Chief Executive, Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance, Internal Audit Manager and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Manager.

**1. Chair**

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Donald Gatt.

**2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests \***

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, there were no 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.

**3. Minute of Meeting of 14 October 2020**

The minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 14 October 2020 was submitted and approved.

**4. Written Questions \*\***

The Committee noted that no written questions has been submitted.

**5. Internal Audit Planning for the Period to 31 March 2021**

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) outlined the planned audit activity for the remainder

of the financial year 2020/21, noting the steps being taken to reduce the possibility of a 'limitation of scope' in respect of the annual assurance opinion to be provided by the Internal Audit Manager on governance, risk management and the system of internal control.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the planned programme of audit activity to be completed in the incoming period in respect of 2020/21 financial year, such programme being designed with the intention, if feasible, of being able to provide the standard internal audit assurances for inclusion with the annual accounts.

## **6. Work on the Internal Audit Section Update**

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) provided the Committee with an update on the work of the Internal Audit Section.

Following consideration the Committee noted the contents of the report.

## **7. National Fraud Initiative 2018-19**

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) provided the Committee with information on the outcomes from the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise for 2018/19; in particular, to give a local context to the national results published within a recent Audit Scotland overview report.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note:

i) the outcomes from the National Fraud Initiative from both a national and local context, recognising that the exercise has preventative, detective and corrective elements which seek to minimise the impact of fraud and other irregularity on the public purse; and

ii) that the Council remains alert to the possibility of fraud and endeavours to mitigate this through the application of effective internal controls within the systems and processes it operates.

## **8. Internal Audit Charter - Terms of Reference Update**

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) invited the Committee to review and approve the updated Internal Audit Charter (terms of reference) document.

Following consideration the Committee approved the updated version of the Internal Audit Charter/terms of reference.

## **9. Question Time \*\*\***

Under reference to paragraph 11 of the minute of the meeting Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 14 October 2020, Councillor Alexander sought an update on the decommissioning of the runway at Kinloss Barracks.

In response, Councillor Gatt advised that he was not aware of progress with the decommissioning but advised that he would write to RAF Lossiemouth to get an update and any update received would be circulated to all Members.

The Chief Executive, further responded and said he would also contact the MOD for an update.





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**REPORT TO: AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 16 JUNE 2021**

**SUBJECT: INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT – 2020/21**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Committee with a copy of the Internal Audit Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2021, together with the Internal Audit Manager's opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's system of internal control.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's scheme of administration, paragraph III (I) (9) - considering the annual assurance statement provided by Internal Audit on the Council's control environment.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Committee considers and notes the contents of the annual report (Appendix 1) and seeks clarification on any matters relating thereto.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards applicable to local government require the Internal Audit Manager to deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report for use by the organisation to inform its governance statement. The governance statement is published with the annual accounts and draws on a wide range of sources to report on how the council is managed and controlled.
- 3.2 It is proposed that the Committee considers the contents of the annual report which provides a commentary on internal audit activity during the year and the opinion on the Council's control environment. The situation this year is complicated by the reference to a 'limitation of scope' given the restrictions on audit work in certain areas of the council, albeit this was partly offset by Internal Audit having oversight of significant funding streams introduced specifically in response to the pandemic.

3.3 The report covers the year to 31st March 2021 and is provided as **Appendix 1**.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan ( Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

Internal Audit assists the organisation to secure the control environment and provision of this annual report supports the Council's commitment to effective and accountable governance arrangements.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

The report supports the requirement under the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards to deliver an annual opinion and report for use by the council to inform its governance statement.

**(c) Financial Implications**

No financial implications.

**(d) Risk Implications**

Audit work mitigates the risks arising as a consequence of inadequate internal control systems.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

No implications.

**(f) Property Implications**

No implications.

**(g) Equalities/ Socio Economic Impact**

An Equality Impact Assessment is not needed because the report refers to the regulatory framework of the council.

**(h) Consultations**

The Chief Financial Officer and the Monitoring Officer have been consulted given the additional guidance which calls for consideration of the impact of the pandemic on the ability of Internal Audit to provide an opinion on the internal control environment.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

**5.1 The Internal Audit Annual Report has been prepared in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and provides a summary of the conclusions from internal audit work completed during the year to inform the audit opinion on the internal control environment operating within the Council.**

Author of Report: Atholl Scott  
Background Papers: Internal Audit Reports and Working Paper Files  
Ref: SPMAN-1042990102-61

APPENDIX 1



**INTERNAL AUDIT**

**ANNUAL REPORT and OPINION**

**1 APRIL 2020 to 31 MARCH 2021**

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 This report is issued in compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which requires the Internal Audit Manager to deliver 'an annual internal audit opinion and report that can be used by the organisation to inform its governance statement', and which 'must conclude on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control'.
- 1.2 The annual report must incorporate:
- the scope, including the time period to which the opinion relates, and any scope limitations;
  - consideration of all related requirements including reliance on other assurance providers
  - a summary of the information that supports the opinion; and
  - the risk or control framework or other criteria used as a basis for the overall opinion
  - the overall opinion, judgement or conclusion reached
- 1.3 The annual report must also include a statement on conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the results of the quality assurance and improvement programme.

## **2. Basis of Opinion**

- 2.1 The opinion is based on my knowledge of the council's governance, risk and control processes and from internal audit activity completed during the period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The provision of the opinion is an important source of assurance and any 'limitations in the scope' as a consequence of the pandemic require to be disclosed.
- 2.2 Factors identified by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy as having the potential to impact on the availability of assurance from Internal Audit during the pandemic include:
- the changing risks and impacts on the organisation;
  - whether key governance, risk management and internal control arrangements have deteriorated or been maintained;
  - changes to the resource base of internal audit whether staff or budget related;
  - demands made on Internal Audit for any advisory or non-audit support activity that does not directly support the audit opinion;

- operational disruption that impacts on the access of internal audit to key staff, information or systems resulting in greater inefficiency and reduced outputs

### **3. Risk or Control framework informing the Opinion**

#### 3.1 Assessing each of the above factors in turn:

- There were significant risks and impacts arising as the council moved to respond to the emergency and lockdown. Internal audit assessed the mechanisms established to secure continuity of essential services. This was done through observation of minutes and action logs for an Incident Management Team, later a Recovery and Renewal Management Team which functioned until committee structures were reviewed and meetings restarted. Appropriate checks and balances were evidenced in comprehensive reports provided to council by senior management.
- Key governance, risk management and internal control arrangements have been maintained albeit capacity issues called for resources to be prioritised, not only to essential services but also to take forward strategic priorities of the council. Internal audit noted progress made in a number of key priority areas while supporting development of the annual governance statement. Internal audit also worked with the Corporate Management Team to update the Corporate Risk Register summarising the principal risks facing the council going forward.
- The audit staff resource was maintained for the full year with all posts within Internal Audit's staffing establishment filled. Some of the resource was diverted to advisory or non-audit duties linked to the pandemic, including supporting the administration of COVID-19 Business Grant awards and dealing with appeals relating to eligibility for grant support made under various schemes. Participation in the process led to a fuller understanding of how the schemes were operating in terms of published guidance and of the controls in place; both important given that amounts disbursed in-year exceeded £20 million. At all times care was taken to maintain audit values of integrity and objectivity, and conflicts of interest, e.g. where a grant applicant was known to the auditor, were avoided by re-assigning appeal determinations to another audit team member.
- The operational efficiency of internal audit has not been impacted to the extent it might have been with staff having remote access to main financial systems. Audit work was successfully carried out on these systems it being noted that controls in place remained effective, with in some cases controls being successfully adapted to accommodate remote working. But there have been some

limitations on the scope of internal audit activity occasioned by delays in being able to access key staff who themselves were encountering significant workload demands; by being unable to access certain facilities due to homeworking restrictions, and by being unable to access systems that potentially could be subject to audit. The effect of these impacts was to reduce the outputs of the internal audit team and restrict the ability to provide audit assurance in these areas, although setting this in context, any restrictions applying were not considered to be material in terms of affecting the audit opinion, when considered alongside other available assurances referenced throughout this report.

#### **4. Summary of Work that supports the Opinion**

4.1 The audit assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control comprises the following elements:

- Governance – in supporting the preparation of the council's annual governance statement, sufficient information was obtained by Internal Audit to conclude that the council generally complies with the latest good governance practice issued by CIPFA / SOLACE, and that the Corporate Management Team (comprising the Chief Executive, two Deputy Chief Executives and the Chief Officer - Moray Health and Social Care ) and Senior Managers have a strong awareness of the challenges facing the council in the incoming period. Written assurances from senior managers also considered governance practice within individual service areas notably referencing the crucial role ICT has in supporting services to maintain continuity of service delivery.
- Risk Management – procedures are well developed with a risk management policy and strategy in place and risk registers maintained at corporate and service levels and as part of project planning and control. The recently updated Corporate Risk Register summarises the principal risks facing the organisation under nine themes; these themes focus on critical risk areas including finance, environment and operational continuity, with a 'new' added theme relating to economic risks linked to the impact of the pandemic and to the UK's departure from the European Union. Not all service risk registers have been updated due to workload pressures, and aligning this to the need for strengthened business continuity arrangements drawing on experiences from the pandemic, additional capacity is being considered to undertake this work. The council has engaged with Zurich the council's insurers in the past for risk management support, and it is intended this will be resumed when new ways of working are progressed.
- Internal Control Environment – the internal control environment has been evaluated through completion of a range of audit projects.

Audit planning this year was more agile given the emerging situation, yet remained risk-based, with work undertaken throughout the year to provide assurances that the main payroll and payments systems continued to operate with suitable controls in place. The plan was also flexible so as to allow emerging control systems to be assessed e.g. for the distribution of funding streams linked to the pandemic.

- In completing the audit of payments, supporting information for a small number of sampled items was not available for review. These related to invoices from suppliers of commissioned services, and linked to findings from prior audit work that reported there was more work required to update service contracts to better align these with current policy and service user needs. It was noted that work on commissioning has been restricted during the period of the pandemic, and it is expected that some impetus will be given to reinvigorating the commissioning process when resources can be made available to undertake this task. This matter is being raised separately through the Moray Integration Joint Board responsible for Social Care services.
- Recurring annual tasks were also completed that provide assurances on the accuracy of a sample of Housing Benefit claims forming part of the annual Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim, and the year-end valuation of stocks held for accounting purposes was concluded under social distancing measures for physical visits. The council's participation in the National Fraud Initiative co-ordinated by Internal Audit also provided positive assurances on a range of datasets. Most of the matched data made available for review in this latest period has been linked to recent changes of circumstances or has signposted a need for data cleansing, as opposed to highlighting fraud or other irregularity involving public funds.
- Internal audit operates independently within the organisation and while there may have been limitations in the scope of the audit as a consequence of the pandemic, there have been no limitations imposed by management on the scope of audit work performed. The internal audit opinion has been informed by the audit work completed during the year and no reliance has been placed on any other assurance providers.

## **5. Statement on Conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards**

- 5.1 The Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014 require public bodies to operate a professional and objective internal auditing service in accordance with recognised standards and practices in relation to internal auditing, the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

- 5.2 The Scottish Local Authorities Chief Internal Auditors' Group, comprising the audit managers or equivalent of all Scottish Councils, has developed a checklist for assessing conformance with the Standards. This supports the requirement for periodic self assessments and external assessments as part of Internal Audit's Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.
- 5.3 During the year, the focus for internal audit has been to continue to progress the implementation of recommendations made following an external quality assessment of internal audit in 2019. This work is now largely completed with most recommendations implemented. Two remain outstanding, one in respect of developing an 'assurance map' of all the assurances available to the council, which on reflection and following further discussion with the assessor, has been agreed as low priority at the present time, and two in relation to the recommendation of having the internal audit manager 'signing-off' committee reports which does not align with council policy. This latter issue had been raised because of the need to demonstrate auditor independence from management.

## **6. Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme**

- 6.1 The external inspection confirmed that the internal audit service generally conforms to the required Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, and this position has been strengthened with the application of the recommendations given in the inspection report. Internal monitoring of performance against the Standards will continue until the next External Quality Assessment, scheduled for 2023, is completed.

## **7. Opinion**

- 7.1 Any system of control can only ever provide reasonable and not absolute assurances that control weaknesses or irregularities do not exist or that there is no risk of error, fraud, or breaches of laws or regulations. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of management to establish an appropriate and sound system of internal control and to monitor the effectiveness of that system, and it is the responsibility of the Internal Audit Manager to provide an annual assessment of the robustness of the internal control system.
- 7.2 The provision of this annual assessment has been more challenging as consequence of the pandemic, and necessarily this opinion must be caveated by a 'limitation of scope' given that the breadth of audit coverage has been restricted by service disruption and audit staff working from home. Nonetheless, the council has had to adapt quickly to maintain the delivery of essential services and similarly internal audit has adapted its approach to provide audit assurances on governance,

risk management and internal control to the extent that this was possible.

- 7.3 Subject then to the 'limitation of scope' described above, and in respect of the audit coverage internal audit was able to undertake as outlined in this report, it is my opinion, as the Internal Audit Manager, that reasonable assurance can be placed on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's internal control system for the year to 31 March 2021.

Atholl Scott, CMIIA  
Internal Audit Manager  
2 June 2021





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**REPORT TO: AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 16 JUNE 2021**

**SUBJECT: WORK OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT SECTION – UPDATE**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 The report provides Committee with an update on the work of the Internal Audit Section.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III I (2) and (7) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to consideration of reports from the council's Internal Auditor and monitoring delivery of the audit service carried out by internal audit.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **It is recommended that Committee consider the contents of this report; seek clarification on any points noted and otherwise note the report.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require the internal audit manager to prepare and present reports to committee on internal audit's activity, performance relative to its audit plan and on any other relevant matters.
- 3.2 Committee has previously been advised that the circumstances of the pandemic resulted in internal audit work becoming more reactive than planned, still in part giving attention to main financial systems and also considering the implications of the pandemic and the responses to it where there have been implications regarding controls over the use of public monies.
- 3.3 At the meeting of this committee on 24 February 2021 (paragraph 5 of the minute refers) a plan of activity for the remainder of the financial year 2020/21 was considered. An update of progress on the projects scheduled at that time is provided as **Appendix 1**.
- 3.4 Also, in respect of the main financial systems work covering payments and payroll respectively, summaries of key findings have been prepared and are provided as **Appendices 2 & 3**.

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

Internal audit work supports good governance and the delivery of efficient services.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

No implications directly arising from this report.

**(c) Financial Implications**

No implications directly arising from this report.

**(d) Risk Implications**

The independent review of selected systems and procedures mitigates the risk associated with inadequate or ineffective control procedures.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

No implications directly arising from this report.

**(f) Property**

No implications directly arising from this report.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

No implications directly arising from this report

**(h) Consultations**

There have been no direct consultations during the preparation of this report.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

**5.1 Internal audit continues to work under the limitations of the pandemic and it has remained challenging to progress audits in some areas because of capacity issues within internal audit or in the services under review. This report provides committee with an update on internal audit work completed in the latest review period and any outstanding issues will continue to be followed up as time and resources permit.**

Author of Report: Atholl Scott  
Background Papers: Internal Audit files  
Ref: SPMAN-1042990102-57

## Appendix 1

MORAY COUNCILINTERNAL AUDIT SERVICEINTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY COMPLETED AND PROGRESSED FOR  
FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2021

<b>WORK PROGRESSED</b>		
<b>Area</b>	<b>Type of coverage</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Procurement and Creditor Payments	Sample testing of expenditure (non-payroll) to assess and ensure compliance with regulations.	Completed with summary of findings prepared - see Appendix 2.
Payroll	Testing of sample transactions to ensure integrity of this main payment system.	Completed with summary of findings prepared – see Appendix 3.
Covid 19 –business support grants - applications	Assisting with the initial processing of grant applications from businesses.	Completed – pandemic support - no report operational issue.
Covid 19 –business support grants - appeals	Consideration and determination of appeals lodged by unsuccessful applicants.	Completed – pandemic support - no report – 30 plus appeals were determined.
Personal Protective Equipment	A review of procurement /sourcing and costs of PPE, stock control and contingency planning looking forward.	Completed with summary of findings submitted to Committee – February 2021.
Flexible Food Fund	Audit of the arrangements for allocation of monies from the Flexible Food Fund	Completed with summary of findings prepared and submitted to Committee – February 2021.
Contractor Sustainability payments	Review to ensure compliance with regulations for funding awarded to council suppliers and contractors whose business model was severely impacted by lockdown	Completed with summary of findings prepared and submitted to Committee- February 2021.

Environmental Services – Grant Claims	Certification of grant claim for bus service operators' grant for six month period to 30 September 2020	Transport Scotland paid grant based on prior year claim because of the pandemic –no verification of claim required
<b>PLANNED WORK PAUSED</b>		
Environmental Services - Public Transport Unit	This audit was selected given issues re the retendering of school transport contracts; now overtaken by events. Deferred for further consideration until 2021/22 year	As noted changing circumstances delayed audit – to be reviewed in due course when workloads are more settled.
Cyber Security	Scheduled for completion during quarter 4 of 2020/21	Now scheduled in 2021/22 plan.
Corporate Services - ICT - Hardware Asset Management	This review remains valid given the large volume of new hardware being acquired to facilitate the expansion of homeworking –still to be scheduled at time of drafting this report.	Meantime still deferred noting that changes in working practices may impact on the scope of the review e.g. increased homeworking
Education and Social Care - Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) in Schools	Deferred given further lockdown implications; will be considered for future audit plan.	A prior audit of PEF soon after it was introduced noted a slow start in utilising the funding hence the plan to revisit – scope of the audit is likely to change as national priorities to address inequalities and consequences thereof are addressed. This information will be awaited before further audit work is scheduled.
<b>PROJECTS SCHEDULED</b>		
National Fraud Initiative	This exercise that the council participates in every two years has added significance with fraud risk elevated and additional data sets (including those for COVID grants) under consideration. Data submissions have been made and matches will be	Good progress has been made. Despite a large volume of data matches again being received, most are readily explained e.g. a recent change of address or similar. The matched data for COVID grants has still to be received;

	made available to the council for checking during Quarter 4. This exercise gives additional assurances on the accuracy of many different council databases.	this has been delayed and Audit Scotland and the NFI are working on this at the time of drafting this report. Timely cancellation of blue badges no longer required remains a problem and while there is no indication these badges are being widely abused this issue will require to be addressed.
Performance Management	There is a need to validate the accuracy of published performance indicators and a sample of these will be checked for accuracy	Not progressed due to workload issues. The central team dealing with Performance Management recording is in the process of bringing reporting up to date - how the information is to be validated has yet to be agreed
ALEO-Moray Leisure	An overview exercise will be undertaken to audit the ongoing relationship and support the council makes available to the Moray Leisure Centre	Initial work completed to provide an updated position of the contractual arrangement between the council and the leisure centre. This will inform future audit plans.
Risk Management	Development of processes- while the risks to the council are widely known there is a requirement to develop recording and reporting practices. A project plan will be prepared to facilitate this.	Work was completed to support the CMT with the update of the corporate risk register but there is more to be done including the acquisition of software to aid presentation of risk information.
Health and Safety	High level overview to assess how the service is addressing additional risks associated with the pandemic.	Not progressed
Property Costs – Schools	A desk top review of costs incurred in the maintenance of school buildings.	Although ledger costs under this heading exceeded £1.3m, more than three quarters of the total covered payments of rates and the remainder

		<p>was for energy costs, minor repairs and cleaning costs. Compared with budgets rates and energy costs were down against budget due to reliefs and school closures respectively Cleaning costs were up due to enhanced cleaning routines. No issues noted from this high level review so concluded as satisfactory.</p>
School Funds	Desktop review of annual returns	<p>There have been delays in securing returns from some schools – while schools have had other priorities, the volume of transactions through the funds reduced during the period of school closures. Education management have re-issued school fund guidelines updated by Internal Audit with procedures on using on-line banking to all schools within the past month. This should act as a reminder for schools to progress the preparation of annual school fund statements that are required after the end of summer term.</p>
Housing DLO	Overview of sub-contractor costs	Carried into audit plan for 2021/22
Year-end processes	Contingent on circumstances applying as at 31 March	<p>Socially distanced audits were completed sufficient to secure valuations of stocks held across council depots for year-end accounting purposes. Opportunities to consolidate stores are under consideration in Housing and Property.</p>

<b>PENDING ITEMS</b>		
Audit of PPP /DBFM – operational phase of school contracts	Some progress has been made with officers involved agreeing responses to recommendations made in the audit action plan.	The final report will need to be considered by Senior Management and should be available for submission to the next meeting of this Committee
Audit of Social Care Adaptations	Adaptations had been paused during lockdown leading to delays and increasing backlogs The adaptations governance group was scheduled to sign off the recommendations made in the audit but this has still to happen at the date of drafting this report	Progress will continue to be monitored



## **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

### **CREDITOR PAYMENTS**

#### **Executive Summary**

The annual audit plan for 2020/21 provides for a review to be undertaken of payments made by the Authority to suppliers of goods, services and works. The purpose of the audit was to confirm ongoing compliance with procurement and payment processing regulations during the pandemic period.

Approximately £66 million was paid by the Council in the six months from April to September 2020 to suppliers of goods and services. Through the use of computer audit software a sample of 30 invoices was chosen from the period, across Council services, with a value of £3.02 million. The process reviewed a selection of randomly selected invoices and also sampled high value invoices which by definition are potentially higher risk. The audit work also involved a separate exercise of extracting multiple invoices with the same value as a check for duplicate payments.

The audit had regard to the Audit Scotland publication 'Public Sector Counter-Fraud' issued in July 2020. The publication detailed a number of good practice recommendations including Internal Audit undertaking a review to ensure proper controls are operating regarding segregation of duties, tendering arrangements, authorisation of expenditure etc. The audit has included these elements within this review.

Findings from the testing undertaken found no issues of concern in terms of contracted suppliers used, sums paid, authorisations and accounting treatment. It is also considered from the checks undertaken, that appropriate controls are operating effectively and the integrity of systems has been maintained. This is a positive outcome given the introduction of remote working and changes to processing practices required as a result of response to the Covid19 pandemic.

The audit was carried out in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).



## **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

### **PAYROLL**

#### **Executive Summary**

As part of the annual coverage of core systems, a review was undertaken of the payroll system, controls and processes in operation in making salary payments to employees within Social Care. A payroll audit was performed earlier in the 20/21 financial year covering all employees processed through the Council's payroll system and therefore included Social Care employees. However, this exercise currently being reported was undertaken to extend the verification of Social Care Adult Services payroll costs and assess the robustness of any changes in practices during the pandemic period.

In terms of scale an average monthly cost of £1.7 million is processed through the payroll system for Social Care employees. The review has covered the systems in place within the 20/21 financial year with testing focused on payroll transactions incurred in the period from July 2020 to January 2021 inclusive. The audit was carried out in accordance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

The significant audit testing work undertaken has involved examination of the processes followed for new starts; terminations of employment; completion, authorisation and submission of timesheets; and claims for overtime, unsocial hours and mileage in order to confirm accurate, supported and timely payments are being made to employees. A sample of persons paid have also been verified as bona fide employees as part of the audit work. This has involved not only the Payroll team but also the managers and administrators of a range of social care services and also the examination of information provided by the HR team.

Audit testing identified no concerns in terms of the validity, accuracy and accounting arrangements for payroll costs. It is considered from the checks undertaken, that appropriate controls are operating effectively and the integrity of systems has been maintained. This is a positive outcome given the introduction of remote working and changes to processing practices required as a result of response to the Covid19 pandemic. For example, instead of a volume of timesheets being submitted to the payroll section for processing, many services such as Care At Home, Community Support Workers, Barlink, Waulkmill and Woodview etc., are now submitting electronic summaries of hours to generate payments. As this carries the risk of less central and independent scrutiny being involved, audit focus was given to sample testing this new process and found accurate employee timesheets being retained within the individual services as supporting source documents for the summary detail submitted to payroll, giving confidence in the continuing integrity of payments despite changing processes.





**REPORT TO: AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 16 JUNE 2021**

**SUBJECT: INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN – YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2022**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES,  
AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

## **1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with details of the planned internal audit coverage for the year ending 31 March 2022.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (I) (6) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to reporting on Internal Audit's programme of work.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 **It is recommended that the Committee:**

- i) **consider and note the proposed internal audit coverage for the 2021/22 financial year;**
- ii) **consider and note that Internal Audit's ability to provide the necessary audit assurances is likely to continue to be impacted by changed working practices as a consequence of the pandemic, and by forthcoming vacancies in internal Audit's staffing establishment; and**
- iii) **seek clarification on any matters arising from the report or from the attached appendices.**

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) applicable to Local Government in Scotland requires the Internal Audit Manager to report functionally to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on various issues relative to audit planning. This requirement includes preparing a risk based internal audit plan for submission to Committee, and providing the Committee with details of internal audit resourcing or other issues that may impact on the scope of audit work.

### **Definition of Internal Audit**

- 3.2 Internal auditing is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity designed to add value and improve an organisation's operations. It helps an organisation accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

### **Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) Requirements**

- 3.3 PSIAS sets out the requirement for the:
- Internal Audit Manager to prepare a risk-based audit plan which takes into account the Council's strategic objectives, associated risks and the views of senior management and the Committee;
  - Internal Audit Manager to review and adjust the plan as necessary in response to changes in the Council's business, risks, operations and priorities;
  - Audit plan to incorporate or be linked to a strategic or high-level statement of how internal audit will be delivered and developed in accordance with the Internal Audit Charter approved by this committee at its meeting on 24 February 2021 (para. 8 of the minute refers) and how it links to the organisational objectives and priorities.

### **Internal Audit Plan**

- 3.4 The internal audit plan is a means of determining the priorities of the internal audit activity and how these fit with the wider goals of the Council. Internal audit's approach to annual audit planning is risk-based with all areas which may be subject to audit review contained within an 'audit universe'. The audit universe is reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to include all significant activities and systems that contribute to the achievement of the Council's priorities and objectives.
- 3.5 The audit universe is risk assessed each year to help determine the annual audit plan and ensure that suitable audit time and resources are devoted to reviewing the more significant areas of risk. Note, however, that the audit universe, whilst a key factor, is not the only consideration when determining the audit plan. Senior management have been consulted on priority areas for review, and cognisance is taken of the plans of external audit and other statutory agencies, in order to avoid duplication, and increase potential for cross reliance.
- 3.6 The audit universe risk assessment is based upon a number of factors including:
- materiality (based on expenditure or income)
  - sensitivity (based on whether a service is a statutory duty, statutory power or non-statutory, is customer facing and whether it features as a specific challenge in the Council's service plans)
  - time elapsed since an area was last subject to review
  - overall audit assessment of the control environment

- 3.7 This information aids the development of a plan designed to enable the Internal Audit Manager to meet the requirement to provide an annual internal audit opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems of internal control, for inclusion in the annual governance statement published with the Council's annual financial statements.
- 3.8 The plan also takes in specific projects which the external auditor will seek to place reliance on by reviewing the audit files and re-performing of certain audit tests to validate the work completed. In line with the external audit plan this will take in
- Housing benefit payments subsidy claim (substantive testing).
  - Internal audit work on COVID funding support streams
  - National Fraud Initiative (testing of data matches)
  - Governance and corporate initiatives (collation of management assurances for the annual governance statement.)
- 3.9 While the roles of internal audit and external audit are separate and distinct, internal audit maintains a close working relationship with the external auditor as required in order to secure an optimum combined benefit from the audit resource and avoid duplication. The recent external quality assessment report encourages internal audit to consider if there are other bodies whose work internal audit could place reliance on for assurance purposes.
- 3.10 An additional element of the planning process takes place for the Moray Integration Joint Board (IJB), the council's internal audit manager having been appointed as the Board's Chief Internal Auditor for the period to March 2022. A Moray IJB Audit, Performance and Risk Committee has been established and a separate internal audit plan is prepared for the Board which has its own governance and accounting arrangements.
- 3.11 The audit role for the IJB involves providing assurances that governance and financial arrangements have been developed and are operating in line with policy and that selected systems and processes are suitably controlled. Planned audit inputs operationally to date have focused on social care services the Council delivers under direction from the IJB. Links have been established with internal audit providers and finance managers in NHS Grampian, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils and IJBs and the practice of ensuring appropriate assurances are available continues to be refined with audit processes being developed as the IJBs mature.
- 3.12 The Council's internal audit service also undertakes internal audit work for Grampian Valuation Joint Board and this requires the provision of annual assurances on the main financial systems operated for payroll, payments and income from funding requisitions from the constituent authorities and other sources. The Joint Board's systems align with those of the Council but require annual review and testing in order to provide assurances for the separate annual financial statements the Board is required to prepare and publish.
- 3.13 While the prevention of fraud and error rests with management through the design and operation of suitable systems of control, the audit plan continues to provide time for internal audit to co-ordinate the Council's participation in the

National Fraud Initiative, a data matching exercise involving a range of public sector bodies. This activity is viewed as complementary to other planned audit activities, and participation assists internal audit in assessing potential for the occurrence of fraud and related fraud risk.

- 3.14 The pandemic has resulted in significant changes within current working practices that make Audit Planning challenging, and uncertainty remains regarding these arrangements in the period ahead. All audit staff are still working from home which brings some limitations to the audit process and in the past few months some team members were redeployed into non-audit duties – still in roles that contributed to good governance practice but not operating as independent auditors. Team members have been fortunate to be classed as mobile workers each with a dedicated work laptop and mobile phone but lack of face to face contact has slowed the pace of audits. Also, many of the employees internal audit would ordinarily work with have had a focus elsewhere to ensure continuity of service in front facing services.
- 3.15 In normal times, there is often a need to accommodate any additional audit work that may be required to address any emerging issues or specific matters of concern, and the plan provides a number of audit days for this purpose. These days can also be used where completion of a planned project takes longer than anticipated either due to the complexity of the project or the identification of a need for additional testing. Recent experience has shown that there needs to be more flexibility in audit planning given the pace of change. Where at one time five year audit plans were commonplace, the PSIAS standards now advocate annual planning noting that ‘the plan should be sufficiently flexible and kept up to date with the organisation and its changing risks and priorities’.
- 3.16 Sufficiently flexible is not defined; however, it suggests that ‘contingency days’ should be held to deal with emerging issues. Thus a proportion of the available audit days are being retained as contingency days which if not used can accommodate additional audit projects that may be brought into the audit plan later in the year. These projects may be identified by the Internal Audit Manager as an emerging issue or come from a recommendation from this Committee. Details of the available audit days are provided in **Appendix 1**.

#### **Internal Audit Resourcing**

- 3.17 The staff complement of the team is currently 3.8 FTE including the Internal Audit Manager who has a range of responsibilities including the management and supervision of the team, planning work, development of the service, servicing Committees, overseeing risk management, overseeing the work of a Corporate Investigations Officer and participating in the preparation of the annual governance statement. On the basis that all posts are filled, and allowing for overheads for holidays, training, administration and the like, some 792 working days are available to be allocated for the 2021/22 year. However given the need to maintain an agile response to issues relating to the pandemic and the impending vacancies in the Internal Audit Manager post and one of the Auditor posts (2 FTE), only 600 of these days have meantime been allocated. This may be ambitious depending on how long the vacancies are carried and the consequential ‘knock on’ impacts on the other members of the internal audit team. Any further proposed changes to the plan will be shared with the Committee.

- 3.18 Meantime, priority areas have been determined by internal audit and are listed in **Appendices 2 and 3**.
- 3.19 The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require the Internal Audit Manager to consider whether or not the audit staffing resources are sufficient to meet the audit needs of the organisation, and where it is believed that the level of resources may impact adversely on the provision of the annual internal audit opinion, to draw that to the attention of the Committee. The Internal Audit Manager vacancy should provide an opportunity to review the remit and staffing establishment for internal audit to ensure it remains fit for purpose going forward, and this is under consideration by management. Until this is completed, there is a risk the service may have insufficient capacity to meet the requirements placed upon it by the internal auditing standards.
- 3.20 In considering the sufficiency of the audit coverage, Committee is reminded that the responsibility for developing and maintaining a sound control environment rests with management and not with Internal Audit. It should also be noted that Internal Audit is not the only scrutiny activity within the Council, with services challenged through other mechanisms including external inspection and performance management reporting.

#### **4 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

- (a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**  
No direct implications.
- (b) **Policy and Legal**  
The activities of Internal Audit assist the organisation to demonstrate the control environment and risk management arrangements are consistent with good practice.
- (c) **Financial Implications**  
No direct implications.
- (d) **Risk Implications**  
The work of internal audit mitigates the risk of dilution of controls established within systems to ensure best value is secured in the use of public resources.
- (e) **Staffing Implications**  
It will be important to review staffing arrangements promptly to ensure internal audit has the capacity to deliver its responsibilities to the council Moray IJB and the Grampian Valuation Joint Board; that is, to conduct sufficient work on which to base an annual opinion on the governance, risk management and internal control systems for each organisation.
- (f) **Property**  
No implications.

**(g) Equalities/ Socio Economic Impact**

No impacts to report.

**(h) Consultations**

Planned audit work is informed throughout the year from various sources including service managers. There have been no direct consultations in respect of this report.

**5 CONCLUSION**

**5.1 This report invites the Committee to consider and note the planned internal audit coverage for the 2021/22 year, noting there will be challenges for the audit team to provide the necessary audit assurances as a consequence of staff vacancies in the team, including that of the Internal Audit Manager post.**

Author of Report: Dafydd Lewis, Senior Auditor  
Background Papers: Internal audit files  
Ref: SPMAN-1042990102-63

## APPENDIX 1

MORAY COUNCILINTERNAL AUDITANNUAL AUDIT PLAN – 2021/22

<b>Staff Resources</b>	<b>Available Days</b>
3.8 FTE staff x 52 weeks x 5 days	988
Less:	
<b>Overheads:</b>	
Vacancies	192
Annual Leave (including public holidays)	148
Training	19
Sick Leave (Estimate)	19
Administration	<u>10</u>
	<u>388</u>
Available Days	<u>600</u>
<b>Allocation of Days</b>	
Core Financial Systems (Appendices 2 & 3)	160
Departmental Audit Projects (Appendices 2 & 3)	130
Moray Integration Joint Board	50
Management, Supervision and Service Development	55
Risk Management	45
Governance Statement / Corporate Initiatives	30
PSIAS- Self Assessment & Development	10
National Fraud Initiative (oversight and reporting)	30
Grampian Valuation Joint Board	10
Follow-up Work	20
Contingency	<u>60</u>
	<u>600</u>



## APPENDIX 2

**MORAY COUNCIL – INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE**  
**ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2021/22**  
**LIST OF PROPOSED PROJECTS**

**CORE FINANCIAL SYSTEMS**

Audit Area	Total Days
Housing Benefits Subsidy Claim and Testing	30
Procurement and Creditor Payments	30
Purchasing Cards	20
Council Tax System	25
Capital Plan	20
Year-end Stock Taking	15
Cyber Security	<u>20</u>
<b>TOTAL - CORE SYSTEMS</b>	<b><u>160</u></b>

**OTHER SYSTEMS**

Departmental Projects per Appendix 3	130
Risk Management	45
Governance and Corporate Initiatives	30
Management and Supervision	55
Moray Integration Joint Board	50
Grampian Valuation Joint Board	10
National Fraud Initiative	30
PSIAS- Self Assessment and Development	10
Follow up work	20
Contingency/ Consultancy	<u>60</u>
<b>TOTAL – OTHER SYSTEMS</b>	<b><u>440</u></b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b><u>600</u></b>



## APPENDIX 3

MORAY COUNCILINTERNAL AUDIT SERVICEANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2021/22 – DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECTS

<b>CORE FINANCIAL SYSTEMS</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Type of coverage</b>
Housing Benefits - Rent Rebates and Rent Allowances	Substantive testing of selected benefit claims to confirm the accuracy of the Council's benefit subsidy claim for 2020/21 year
Procurement and Creditor Payments	Continuous auditing of samples of non-pay expenditure to test compliance with procurement and payment processing regulations
Purchasing Cards	Review the systems and controls for the management of purchasing cards
Council Tax	Review the arrangements for collection and accounting of council tax income.
Capital Plan	Audit testing of contract management arrangements for selected projects within the capital plan
Stocks and stores - year end valuations	Attendance at stocktaking and reconciliation of stocks held to ledger balances
Cyber security	Identification and assessment of the potential threats to the council's ICT systems and how these are being managed
<b>OTHER SYSTEMS</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Type of coverage</b>
Environmental Services- Collection and accounting for planning fees	Review the accounting arrangements for the collection, recording etc. of planning fees (10)
Environmental Services - Roads Maintenance (Planned)	Audit of roads maintenance planned repairs (20)
Environmental Services – Grant Claims	Certification of grant claims as required: strategic timber; bus operators, regeneration schemes as appropriate (10)
Environmental Services - Business Continuity	A review of the Council's Business Continuity arrangements (15)

Environmental Services - Housing and Property - Stores	A review of the effectiveness of current arrangements for accounting for materials used in the repair and maintenance of council housing (20)
Corporate Services- Social Media Accounts	Review of the management and control of Council social media accounts (20)
Corporate Services- Petty Cash	Review of the administration of petty cash expenditure and reimbursements (15)
Education- Primary and Early Years Security	Review the controls in place to mitigate the risk of unauthorised access to primary schools and early years' establishments. (20)
<b>Moray Integration Joint Board</b>	
Client Monies	An audit of the management of and accounting for social care client monies (20)
Self-Directed Support	Review of Self Directed Support financial monitoring arrangements (30)



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**REPORT TO: AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ON 16 JUNE 2021**

**SUBJECT: ACCOUNTS COMMISSION REPORT - LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SCOTLAND - OVERVIEW 2021**

**BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

1.1 To draw the attention of the Committee to a recent Accounts Commission publication providing an overview of Local Government in Scotland over the past financial year.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (I) (8) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to consideration of reports prepared by the Accounts Commission/Audit Scotland.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1 Committee is asked to note:**

- i) the key messages contained within the Accounts Commission report, which consider the issues arising from the pandemic thus far and how councils have responded; and**
- ii) the Commission's view aligns with that of the council that it will take time to recover fully from the pandemic and that, while challenging, opportunities are there to review and assess how services are delivered in a manner that optimises outcomes for the citizens and communities of Moray.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 In late May, the Accounts Commission published its annual update report entitled Local Government in Scotland – Overview 2021. The focus of the report this year has been on the unprecedented challenges arising from the pandemic and consideration of how councils have responded.

3.2 The report is noted as being the first in a series of reports that will reflect on the evolving and longer term issues arising from the pandemic and how local government will need to adapt going forward.

- 3.3 The key messages have been drawn from the review findings from across Scottish council areas. All of these accord with the situation here in Moray. Broadly these cover and consider:
- the positive council responses in dealing with the profound impacts of the pandemic;
  - how relationships have developed with communities and strengthened partnership working;
  - how service disruption has impacted on people's lives, referencing in particular, care services, education, mental health, child protection and economic challenges;
  - the versatility of the workforce in taking on new and additional responsibilities;
  - changes in governance structures and processes to enable delivery of critical services while retaining standards of probity and accountability;
  - ongoing financial challenges in the short, medium and longer term;
  - council plans for recovery and moving forward noting that returning to business as usual is not an option, with issues such as climate change, digital and tackling inequalities mentioned by way of example;
  - the need to learn lessons from the pandemic and consolidate where these enable positive outcomes to be delivered.
- 3.4 While the report is broad in its scope and coverage, it makes no specific recommendations. It is nevertheless a useful summary of the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland's assessment of councils' responses to the pandemic and will, in that context, be of interest to members of this committee.
- 3.5 A full copy of the report is available at [https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2021/nr\\_210527\\_local\\_government\\_overview.pdf](https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/uploads/docs/report/2021/nr_210527_local_government_overview.pdf)

#### **4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

The strategic plans of the council and its partners align in many respects to the issues outlined in the Accounts Commission reflecting the key priorities to be taken forward in Moray.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

No implications directly arising from this report.

**(c) Financial implications**

The report highlights financial challenges facing local government and the importance of sound financial stewardship. This will continue to be reviewed and reported upon to the council and its committees by the Chief Financial Officer.

**(d) Risk Implications**

The report references risks throughout and the council is alert to these risks as evidenced in its recently updated Corporate Risk Register.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

No implications directly arising from this report.

**(f) Property**

No implications directly arising from this report.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

The report highlights that inequalities will have widened as a consequence of the pandemic. This will continue to be a consideration for the council as it develops policy and practice.

**(h) Consultations**

The Monitoring Officer and the Internal Audit Manager have been consulted and are in agreement with the report.

**5. CONCLUSIONS**

**5.1 The Accounts Commission report provides information on the impact of the pandemic and how councils have responded, and is a useful source of reference for elected members and officers.**

Author of Report: Atholl Scott

Background Papers: Accounts Commission paper

Ref: SPMAN-1042990102-67

