

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 14 October 2020

remote locations via video-conference,

PRESENT

Councillor George Alexander, Councillor Theresa Coull, Councillor John Cowe, 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 Sonya Warren

APOLOGIES

Councillor Frank Brown, Councillor Walter Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the above meeting were the Chief Executive, Internal Audit Manager, Senior Auditor and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer.

1. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, Councillor Morrison declared an interest in agenda items 6, 7 and 11 on the agenda as a Vice Chair of the Moray Integration Joint Board.

Councillor Leadbitter declared an interest in agenda items 6 and 10 as Chair of Grampian Valuation Joint Board.

Councillor Ross declared that he is a newly appointed member of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board but has not yet attended a meeting.

Councillor Coull declared an interest in agenda items 6, 7, 10 and 11 as a current member of the Moray Integration Joint Board and a past member of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board.

Councillor Eagle declared an interest in agenda items 6, 7 and 11 as a member of the Moray Integration Joint Board.

Councillors Morrison, Leadbitter, Coull and Eagle all indicated that they would take part in the consideration and decisions of those items in line with section 5.18.2 of the Councillors Code of Conduct.

There were no other 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 other declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

2. Minute of Meeting of 29 January 2020

The minute of the meeting of 29 January 2020 was submitted and approved.

3. Internal Audit Annual Report 2019-20

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) provided the Committee with a copy of the Internal Audit Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2020, together with the Internal Audit Manager's opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's system of internal control.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the contents of the annual report given as Appendix 1.

4. Statement of Outstanding Business

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) asked the Committee to consider progress and timescales in relation to follow up reports and actions requested by this Committee at previous meetings.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note progress and timescales in relation to follow-up reports requested by the Committee.

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

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) asked the Committee to consider the effect of the pandemic on internal audit coverage, and how this has impacted on audit coverage for the past few months and on plans for the remainder of the financial year 2020/21.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the work already completed in the first six months of the year 2020/21 and the flexibility applied to the selection of audit projects for the remainder of the financial year given the constraints occasioned by the pandemic.

6. Work of the Internal Audit Section

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

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

7. Accounts Commission Report

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) provided Committee with the last in a series of four reports considering issues raised in a recent Accounts Commission publication relating to 'safeguarding public money' covering the consequences of weak internal controls and the internal audit function.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

- i) note the final two of eight aspects of the Accounts Commission report on 'How Councils Work' entitled 'Safeguarding Public Money: are you getting it right?; and
- ii) the Council responses to the questions provided in the two checklists covering 'Consequences of weak controls' and 'the internal audit function'.

8. External Audit Plan for the Year Ending 31 March 2020

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) provided Committee with a copy of the External Auditor's annual plan for 2019/20.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the contents of the External Auditor's annual audit plan for 2019/20 and as a consequence of the pandemic in line with a revised timetable agreed for all Scottish local authorities, the date for reporting on the audit of the annual financial statements has been extended by two months to the end of November 2020.

9. Public Sector Internal Audit Standards - External Quality Assessment Update

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) provided Committee with an update relative to implementing recommendations arising from the external quality assessment of Internal Audit.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the progress towards addressing the recommendations arising from the external quality assessment of the internal audit service.

10. SPSO Recommendations Report

A report by the Chief Executive asked Committee to consider the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Recommendations Report to demonstrate that SPSO recommendations are considered at a senior level.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

- i) note the content of the SPSO Recommendations Report; and
- ii) approve the contents of the report.

11. Question Time ***

Councillor Alexander, having read in the press that the new navy ship affiliated with Moray, HMS Spey, has completed her sea trials, sought an update on whether the ship would be paying a visit to the Moray Firth.

In response the Council Leader confirmed that he had received an invitation from the Commander of the vessel inviting him to Glasgow to visit the ship but had declined the invitation due to the current situation but it is hoped the ship will be visiting the area soon.

Councillor Alexander sought an update on the runway at the Kinloss Barracks following the completion of the new runway at RAF Lossiemouth.

In response, Councillor Gatt confirmed that it was his understanding that the runway would eventually be decommissioned.