

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 13 September 2023

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

PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES

Councillor John Cowe, Councillor David Gordon

IN ATTENDANCE

The Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development), Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance, Audit and Risk Manager, Interim Strategy and Planning Lead, Lindsey Robinson, Committee Services Officer and Angela Pieri, Grant Thornton - External Auditor.

1. Chair

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

2. 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 (MIJB).

Mr Augustus declared that he was a member of the MIJB and Skills Development Scotland.

Councillor Stuart declared an interest in the Refugee Integration Scheme as he was a host family.

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.

3. Minute of the meeting held 27 June 2023

The minute of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee dated 27 June 2023 was submitted and approved.

4. Written Questions **

The Committee noted that no written questions had been submitted.

5. Internal Audit Section Update Report

The meeting had before it a report by the Audit and Risk Manager providing Committee with an update on the work of the Internal Audit Section.

During consideration Councillor Gatt sought clarification as to why critical functions were classified as a medium risk on pages 17 and 18.

In response the Audit and Risk Manager advised that work was ongoing in this area but this would be amended.

Thereafter the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

6. Internal Audit Section Completed Projects Report

The meeting had before it a report by the Audit and Risk Manager advising Committee on the work of the Internal Audit Section for the period from 28 June 2023 to 13 September 2023.

During consideration Councillor Bloomfield sought clarification as to why there is no online application or online payment system for the disabled parking scheme.

In response the Audit and Risk Manager advised that this has been highlighted with the service as it needs to be looked at.

Adjournment

The Chair agreed to an adjournment to correct a technical issue.

Resumption of Meeting

Following a short adjournment, Councillor Gatt sought clarification on whether money owed could be recovered after this amount of time.

In response the Audit and Risk Manager advised yes the money could still be recovered and that a review if invoicing across the board is coming to a future meeting as income recovery is a concern.

Councillor Gatt raised concern that the Blue Badge Scheme policy was last updated in 2013.

In response the Audit and Risk Manager advised that the policies and procedures would be looked at as some do need to be updated as soon as possible. They will be further updated by any changes going forward.

Councillor Leadbitter sought clarification as to whether this report was going to the IJB Audit Performance and Risk Committee.

The Audit and Risk Manager confirmed that it would be.

Councillor Divers sought clarification on how the information gets out to the public as the paper went to IJB 2 weeks ago and just provided a website and a phone number.

Mr Augustus added that this would be a good opportunity to streamline the process.

In response the Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance advised that he would take the points back to the department concerned and that the information hubs would help the public to complete the forms if necessary.

Councillor Divers raised concern about upfront, online payments and how people would do that if they had no access to IT.

The Audit and Risk Manager advised that this would need to be referred back to the service.

Councillor Leadbitter sought clarification on the Refugee Integration Scheme as it was an unplanned body of work, completed at pace by a small team and whether there was an audit plan in place for this.

In response the Audit and Risk Manager advised that additional work items could be added but they may have a knock on to items already planned.

Thereafter the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

7. Question Time ***

Committee Attendance

Under reference to item 9 of the minute of the meeting of this committee held 27 June 2023, Councillor Diver sought an update on committee Chairs or Heads of Service attending this committee to answer questions raised.

The Chair advised that he was due to have discussions with the committee chairs and he would bring this up.

Councillor Divers added that the numbers were difficult due to the administration only having 9 members, meaning that committee chairs were also members of this committee.

The Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance advised that it was always good to keep the remit of the committee under review. The last decision of the full Council was that there were 15 members with a political balance. He added that further discussion was needed offline around this.

The Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) acknowledged the cross part questions raised around the operation and role of the Committee and added that she would refer this to the Chief Executive to speak to members.

Councillor McLennan added that he was of the opinion that all of the committees were large and that the governance should be looked at for best value. He was also of the opinion that it should be the committee chairs who attend not the head of service as they have other commitments.

Timescales

Councillor Stuart sought clarification on whether the timescales provided by the services could be questioned.

In response the Chair advised that the timescales were decided by the services. The role of the Committee is to seek assurance on any risks. He added that some department timescales were longer than the audit recommendations and it is up to them to justify that.

Training

Councillor McLennan asked that any training, including CIPFA, be provided online and recorded to allow members to access it as and when they need to.

In response the Audit and Risk manager advised that Organisational Development are looking at the training and the CIPFA guidance will be reported back to a future committee.

The Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) advised that the method of training would depend on the subject.

Early Years Childcare Portacabins

Councillor Macrae sought clarification on when the audit report on the Aberlour nursery portacabins would be available.

In response the Audit and Risk Manager advised that he would be going back to the service in October and then report back to members at either the November or February meeting.

Freedom of Information

Councillor McLennan stated that the Council policy on the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1985 was due to be reviewed in 2017. He sought clarification as to whether a report would come to this committee or another.

In response the Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance advised that the Information Governance report covering Freedom of Information and Data Protection will go before the corporate committee and then come before this committee if subject to audit