

AUDIT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Audit Committee held by Video Conferencing on Wednesday, 18 November 2020 at 2.00 p.m.

Present: Councillors Jim Brown, Karen Conaghan, Jonathan McColl, John Millar, John Mooney, Martin Rooney, Brian Walker and Lay Members Mr Chris Johnstone and Mr Christopher Todd.

Attending: Joyce White, Chief Executive; Jo Gibson, Head of Community Health & Care Services and Jonathan Hinds, Chief Social Work Officer, West Dunbartonshire Health & Social Care Partnership (H&SCP); Victoria Roger, Strategic Lead – People & Technology; Stephen West, Strategic Lead – Resources; Malcolm Bennie, Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture, Communities & Facilities; Andi Priestman, Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud; Raymond Lynch, Section Head (Licensing), Robert Mackie, Senior Officer (Licensing Services) and Craig Stewart, Committee Officer.

Also Attending: Ms Gemma McNally, Audit Scotland.

Apologies: An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Daniel Lennie.

Councillor John Mooney in the Chair

CHAIR'S REMARKS

Councillor Mooney, Convener, welcomed everyone to the November meeting of the Audit Committee which was being held remotely, in terms of Section 43 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

Thereafter, the Convener advised that a process/procedure had been developed for the meeting (a copy of which had previously been circulated to Members). Thereafter, the Committee agreed to note the procedure in place for the conduct of the meeting and the meeting then commenced by video conferencing.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Audit Committee held on 16 September 2020 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

OPEN FORUM

The Committee noted that no open forum questions had been submitted by members of the public.

STRATEGIC RISKS 2017-22

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – People & Technology providing an update on the COVID-19 and EU Exit strategic risks.

After discussion and having heard the Strategic Lead – People & Technology and the Chief Executive in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the draft risk outline for SR012 Pandemic as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) to note the revised EU Exit Assurance Plan, contained within Appendix 2 to the report; and
- (3) to note the revised EU Exit Assurance Plan for HSCP Services, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report.

INTERNAL AUDIT PLANS 2019/20 AND 2020/21 – PROGRESS TO 21 OCTOBER 2020

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead - Resources advising on progress at 21 October 2020 against the Audit Plans for 2019/20 and 2020/21.

After discussion and having heard the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud and relevant officers in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL SELF-ASSESSMENT – UPDATE ON ACTION PLANS

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources providing an update on the status of the action plan arising from the Self-Assessment exercise.

After discussion and having heard the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress of the agreed actions arising from the self-assessment exercises carried out in 2018 and 2019; and
- (2) to note that progress on the completion of the agreed actions would be reported annually to the Audit Committee.

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE AUDIT COMMITTEE 2019-20

A report was submitted by Strategic Lead – Resources providing Members with an Annual Report on the Audit Committee for 2019/20.

After discussion and having heard the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud and Councillor Mooney, Chair, in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to endorse the Chair's Annual Report on the Audit Committee for 2019/20; and
- (2) that the report should be presented to a future meeting of the Council.

AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT – COVID-19 GUIDE FOR AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEES

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Resources informing of new guidance issued by Audit Scotland on key issues for consideration by audit and risk committees during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was noted that the Appendix to the report had inadvertently been omitted from the Committee issue but that a copy of the Appendix had subsequently been sent to all Members of the Committee by email.

After discussion and having heard the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the report and the four key areas identified; and

- (2) to note that a sub-group will be formed from Members of the Audit Committee, comprising of the Chair, Councillor Mooney, 1 Member of the Administration and the 2 Lay Members on the Committee, to consider the questions posed in the guidance. It was also noted that the work of the sub-group would be supported by the Shared Service Manager – Audit & Fraud and that a further report would be presented to the Audit Committee at its next scheduled meeting in March 2021 outlining the current position.

SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS REPORT 2019/20

A report was submitted by the Strategic Lead – Communications, Culture, Communities & Facilities presenting the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) report on complaints handling by West Dunbartonshire Council for the year 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020.

After discussion and having heard the Strategic Lead in further explanation of the report and in answer to a Member's question, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to support a commitment to improve response times for complaints to ensure compliance with Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) timelines;
- (2) to encourage an improvement culture that welcomes complaints in any form so that the Council could capture all expressions of dissatisfaction and use this information to drive future improvements;
- (3) to ensure each service uses the data provided to identify and progress improvement activity; and
- (4) to ensure time was allocated at regular management teams for complaints analysis to allow Performance & Strategy Business Partners to support and capture improvement and learning activity for progress reporting.

The meeting closed at 2.56 p.m.