

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar, on Tuesday 26 January 2016 at 2.00pm.

Present: Councillors BRIAN BOYD, BILL BOWLES, LYNNE DEVINE, BILL DUFF, CRAIG FOTHERINGHAM, JEANETTE GAUL, JIM HOUSTON, IAN McLAREN, ROB MURRAY, RONNIE PROCTOR MBE and MARK SALMOND.

Councillor BOYD, Vice-Convener, in the Chair.

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Bob Spink and Bob Myles.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Bill Duff and Jeanette Gaul each declared non financial interests in Item 4 as they were Council appointed Directors of Angus Alive. They indicated they would participate in any discussion and voting.

3. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 24 November 2015 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

4. INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY UPDATE

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 24 November 2015, there was submitted Report No 27/16 by the Service Manager – Governance and Consultancy, providing the Audit Manager's update on the main findings of Internal Audit Reports issued since the date of the last meeting.

Four Internal Audit Reports had been issued since the last meeting, these being:-

- Housing Strategy – Compliance with Scottish Housing Quality Standard
- Community Asset Transfer
- Carbon Reduction
- Culture and Leisure Trust

The Report presented the progress of internal audit activity within the Council up to the end of December 2015 and also provided an update on progress with the 2015/16 Internal Audit Plan, along with a number of proposed amendments to the Audit Plan.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress with the 2015/16 Internal Audit Plan; and
- (ii) to approve the requested amendments to the 2015/16 Internal Audit Plan.

5. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER UPDATE

With reference to Article 9 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 25 August 2015, there was submitted Report No 28/16 by the Service Manager – Governance and Consultancy, presenting the quarterly Corporate Risk Register update, for review and challenge.

The Report indicated that in accordance with the Risk Management Strategy, the Council Management Team would review the Corporate Risk Register (CRR) quarterly and consequently update this Committee on progress made against identified actions. There were currently 18 corporate risks and these had all been assessed and updated and detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report. The summary of risks along with their current risk score and original risk score, was attached as Appendix 2 to the Report.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Corporate Risk Register update.

6. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2015 – UPDATED ACTION PLAN

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 23 June 2015, there was submitted Report No 29/16 by the Service Manager – Governance and Consultancy, presenting an update on the Annual Governance Statement action plan, for review and comment.

The Report indicated that the Annual Governance Statement which was included in the Council's 2014/15 Annual Accounts, included a number of developments to be taken forward during 2015/16 to strengthen the Council's corporate governance. Attached as Appendix 1 to the Report, was the updated action plan. A further update would be reported to this Committee in June 2016 as part of the annual corporate governance review.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the 2014/15 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan Update Report.

7. SICKNESS ABSENCE JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2015

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 29 September 2015, there was submitted Report No 30/16 by the Head of HR, IT and Organisational Development, advising of the level of sickness absence within the Council for the period 1 July to 30 September 2015.

The Report indicated that for all Council employees there had been a 9.3% reduction in the percentage of working days lost, when compared with the previous quarter in April to June 2015. There was a 1.7% increase in the percentage of working days lost, when compared with the corresponding quarter in 2014/15. The increase was a result of both the teachers and local government employees' absence increasing by 0.8% and 1.2% respectively, compared with the corresponding quarter in 2014/15.

The Committee agreed to note the terms of the Report.

8. AUDIT SCOTLAND – REDUCING FRAUD AND ERROR IN HOUSING BENEFIT

There was submitted Report No 31/16 by the Head of Corporate Improvement and Finance, presenting for the Committee's interest and review, a recently published report by Audit Scotland which was relevant to the business of the Council and the role of this Committee.

The Report indicated that the monetary value of housing benefit (HB) fraud and error was steadily rising across the UK, with 2014/2015 showing a loss of £1.38 billion. The Report looked at the activity undertaken by Councils in order to reduce fraud and error in housing benefit caseloads. Intervention across a number of Scottish councils identified areas of good practice and where improvement could be made.

The Report also indicated that Angus Council was cited as demonstrating good practice in a number of areas.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Audit Scotland Report "Review of Activity to Reduce Fraud and Error in Housing Benefit", attached as Appendix 1 to the Report.

9. PETITION – SAVE OUR SHELTERED HOUSING

There was submitted Report No 32/16 by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, advising members of a petition in excess of 1500 signatures received in connection with the proposed amendments to the support offered within sheltered housing by Angus Council.

The Report indicated that following the introduction of a new procedure for dealing with petitions received by Angus Council on matters relating to Council business, a petition had been handed to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services by Councillor Fairweather on 3 December 2015.

The petition of some 1500 names had been submitted in connection with the proposed changes to the service currently provided within sheltered housing.

Having heard from Councillors Boyd, Salmond and Murray, and also the Service Manager – Governance and Consultancy and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to defer consideration of the Report until a decision had been taken by Angus Council in respect of Report No 13/16 (Review of Housing for Older People).

10. SCRUTINY REVIEWS

The Service Manager – Governance and Consultancy provided members with a brief update and overview in relation to the Scrutiny Panel Reviews. She advised that the Customer Care Review was progressing well and that a meeting with Perth and Kinross Council was currently being arranged. In relation to the Economic Development (Links to Planning) mini review, a draft report would be submitted for consideration to the next Scrutiny Panel meeting in February 2016, thereafter the next mini review topic would be discussed and agreed.