

# ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE** held remotely on Tuesday 1 December 2020 at 2.00pm.

**Present:** Councillors ALEX KING, BILL DUFF, JULIE BELL, BRIAN BOYD, KENNY BRAES, LYNNE DEVINE, BEN LAWRIE, MARK MCDONALD, BOB MYLES and BETH WHITESIDE.

Councillor KING, Convener, in the Chair.

## 1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Mark Salmond.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Myles and Whiteside each declared a non-financial interest in Item 6 (Report No 304/20) as they were members of Tayside Contracts Joint Committee. Both indicated that they had a general dispensation and would participate in any discussion and voting on this item.

Councillor Bell declared a non-financial interest in Item 11 (Report No 310/20) as she was an elected/voting member of the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership. She indicated that she had a general dispensation and would participate in any discussion and voting on this item.

## 3. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 24 September 2020 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

## 4. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

### (a) Quarterly Monitoring Report For The Period 1 July to 30 September 2020

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 25 August 2020, there was submitted Report No 300/20 by Gordon Pryde, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, containing performance information relating to quarter two (1 July to 30 September) of 2020 on the performance and activities in support of the priorities in the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Angus 2017 and the wider community planning priorities.

Attached as an Appendix to the Report was the detailed breakdown and analysis of all data collected during the reporting period which also included an overview of a range of community safety engagement events and partnership working. The Report also provided context to the performance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in the Angus area against indicators and targets.

Gordon Pryde, Local Senior Officer, introduced the performance summary and Scott Gibson, Group Commander summarised the 2020/21 quarter two activities and provided a detailed overview of some of the performance highlights of the twelve headline indicators and targets, highlighting accidental dwelling fires non-fatal fire casualties, non-domestic building fires, fatal road traffic collision casualties, unwanted fire alarm signals, and deliberate primary and secondary fires. Targeted youth initiatives, youth engagement work and the fire setters initiative were ongoing and online education packages had been provided to the education service.

*Councillor McLaren joined the meeting at this point (2.08pm).*

The Group Commander also highlighted that during quarter 2 the Fire Service had faced difficulties during the pandemic in the training of staff however they had ensured that crews were continually prepared for their role. He also highlighted the ongoing partnership working, further details of which were provided in Appendices 1 and 2 of the Report.

Councillors Duff, Bell, Devine, Braes and Boyd sought further information in relation to assistance with flooding, national campaigns around wild camping, partnership working with residents groups and recruitment to the Service, and heard from both the Group Commander and Local Senior Officer in response to the matters raised.

Thereafter, the Convener also sought an update in relation to the fire incident in Forfar on 29 November 2020. The Local Senior Officer advised that the crews in attendance had managed to contain the fire to the footprint of the building and brought it under control with minimal impact to the town centre.

The Convener, on behalf of the Committee, requested that thanks be passed to those in attendance for their handling of the incident.

The Committee agreed to note the performance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service as outlined in the quarterly monitoring Report for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020.

#### **4(b) Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Angus 2020**

There was submitted Report No 301/20 by Gordon Pryde, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, presenting the finalised Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Angus 2020.

The Report indicated that the publication of the new Strategic Plan 2019-22 in October 2019 had instigated a requirement to carry out a mandatory review of all Local Fire and Rescue Plans. The final Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Angus, as detailed in the Appendix to the Report, set out the proposed priorities for improving community safety, whilst helping to address inequalities and enhancing the overall wellbeing of the communities of Angus.

The development of a new Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Angus had provided information on how well the Service was performing against existing priorities as well as highlighting areas for continued improvement and opportunities for change against the growing needs of communities. Furthermore, it helped to identify areas for improving the safety and overall wellbeing of the communities of Angus against a backdrop of increased demand for public services, changing risk profile and more recently the impact of Covid.

Scott Gibson, Group Commander provided an overview of the Plan and thereafter the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report and the supporting Appendices; and
- (ii) to approve the Local Fire and Rescue Service Plan for Angus 2020.

### **5. POLICE SCOTLAND**

#### **(a) Angus Local Policing Area Performance Results for the Period 1 July To 30 September 2020**

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 25 August 2020, there was submitted Report No 302/20 by Chief Superintendent Andrew Todd, which updated the Committee on the performance results for the period 1 July to 30 September 2020.

Appendix A to the Report outlined the performance in relation to the identified policing objectives and outcomes which were monitored and reviewed at the monthly Tasking and Delivery meeting. The data provided in the Report was for information purposes to allow members to conduct their scrutiny responsibilities under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012.

The Report made reference to specific crimes mentioned in the local policing plan and also complimented the force priorities and supported reporting through Community Planning Partnership structures.

Chief Superintendent Andrew Todd provided an overview of the Report, highlighting the local policing priorities and advising members that the current pandemic had affected crime detection rates.

Councillors Bell, Devine, Duff and Braes sought further information in relation to anti-social behaviour, stop searches, fraud, shoplifting, fatal collisions, speeding, hate crime and sexual crime figures and wildlife crime, and in response heard from both Chief Superintendent Todd and Chief Inspector Morrison.

Thereafter having considered the points raised by the members, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) that a breakdown of figures in terms of monies fraudulently obtained be provided at a future meeting;
- (iii) that further information on the motorcycle campaign be provided, including how participants were recruited; and
- (iv) that a further breakdown of hate crimes be provided by protected characteristics.

#### **5(b) Contact Assessment Model**

There was submitted Report No 303/20 by Chief Superintendent Andrew Todd providing information on a new way of managing all 101 and 999 calls to the Police, a significant change to managing call demand in the local policing area.

The model consisted of three elements, namely risk assessments, resolution teams and local policing appointments. Calls would be made to Police Scotland in the same way but prioritisation of calls and different options available would depend on the level of risk or harm involved, identified through an assessment. The contact assessment model had been brought into Tayside Division on 21 April 2020 and had been operating successfully since that time.

Following a number of questions regarding how the system was managed and the monitoring of calls, and having heard from Chief Superintendent Andrew Todd in response, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.

*At this point, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and Police Scotland representatives left the meeting.*

#### **6. TAYSIDE CONTRACTS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019/2020**

There was submitted Report No 304/20 by the Depute Chief Executive presenting Tayside Contracts Annual Performance Report for 2019/20 which highlighted a number of key achievements and developments.

Keith McNamara, Managing Director, Dougie McKay, Head of Operations and Frank Reilly, Head of Human Resources and Facilities Management, all Tayside Contracts provided an overview of Tayside Contracts and the top performance highlights, key performance indicators and targets, current challenges and strategic priorities.

Thereafter the representatives answered questions from Councillors Whiteside, Devine, Duff, Braes, Myles and Bell in relation to modern apprentices, cumulative surpluses, school meals and the percentage of waste, and key performance indicators.

The Convener thanked the representatives of Tayside Contracts for their interesting presentation and thereafter the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Annual Performance Report for 2019/20;
- (ii) that figures on the percentage of food waste be provided to all members of the Committee; and

- (iii) that the key performance indicators be broken down further, if possible, for the next Annual Report together with an overview of the yearly cumulative surpluses.

## **7. INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITY UPDATE**

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 24 September 2020, there was submitted Report No 305/20 by the Service Leader - Internal Audit providing the Internal Audit Activity update on the main findings of the Internal Audit Report issued since the date of the last meeting.

The Report presented the progress with the Internal Audit activity within the Council up to 20 November, provided an update on progress with the planned audit work and progress with implementing internal audit and counter fraud recommendations.

The Service Leader – Internal Audit provided an overview of the Report and highlighted the key areas, including the impact of two members of staff who had been redeployed to the Council's Emergency Centre. Three Internal Audit Reports had been issued since the last meeting, in relation to:-

- Gifts & Hospitality Register and Register of Interests
- LEADER
- Data Analysis/Continuous Auditing: Payroll & Accounts Payable

The car parking income and contract management audit plan had been on hold since March 2020 and the requirement for the audit had been superseded by events, particularly the current suspension of car parking charges and the agreed review of charges underway. It was therefore proposed that the audit be removed from the plan and reconsidered in the future if relevant.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the update on progress with the planned Internal Audit work;
- (ii) to remove the car parking income and contract management audit from the current plan; and
- (iii) to note management's progress in implementing internal audit and counter fraud recommendations.

## **8. AUDIT SCOTLAND COVID-19 GUIDE FOR AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEES – UPDATE**

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 24 September 2020, there was submitted Report No 306/20 by the Service Leader – Internal Audit providing information in response to the issues raised in the Audit Scotland Covid-19 Guide for Audit and Risk Committees.

The Report indicated that Audit Scotland had published their Covid-19 Guide for Audit and Risk Committees on 25 August 2020 and the guide had explored Covid-19 related risk areas and had suggested questions that elected members should be considering in relation to internal controls and assurance, financial management and reporting, governance, and risk management. It was likely that the questions posed would continue to be relevant for committee members to consider further in the future.

Appendix 1 provided a summary of the Council's position to date with information provided by officers from across the Council. Where information had already been reported to Angus Council or a Council Committee, this has been referenced.

Having heard from Councillors Bell and Devine in relation to the extent of partnership working, vicarious trauma and the strategies in place, and the requirement for this information during this difficult time, and having heard from the Chief Executive, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the summary information provided in Appendix 1, and
- (ii) that no further information or action was required at this time.

## **9. SCRUTINY REVIEW PARKING CHARGES ACTION PLAN FOLLOW-UP**

With reference to Article 7 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 19 November 2019, there was submitted Report No 308/20 the Service Leader – Internal Audit providing a further update in response to the Scrutiny Panel Review of Parking Charges.

The follow-up audit had identified a number of separate but related activities underway across the Council which were detailed within Section 4 of the Report, and members were requested to consider if they required any further information relating to these at a future meeting. In relation to the further actions, four had been completed with further related actions in progress in relation to two, one action was well progressed with completion planned for February 2021, and one action had been superseded by actions in the change governance action plan.

Having heard from Councillors Duff and Boyd, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the follow-up position; and
- (ii) that no further information or action was required at this time.

## **10. CORPORATE COUNTER FRAUD MID YEAR REVIEW**

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 16 June 2020, there was submitted Report No 309/20 by the Service Leader - Internal Audit summarising the work undertaken by the Corporate Fraud Team (CFT) during the 6 months to 30 September 2020.

The Report indicated that Angus Council acknowledged its responsibility for ensuring the risks and negative impacts associated with fraud when managed effectively and any allegations of fraud and corruption were investigated by CFT staff in partnership with Council colleagues, where appropriate. The continued work of the CFT played a key role in the Council's response to the risk of fraud and corruption.

The Covid-19 restrictions had impacted on the counter fraud work most significantly in the suspension of investigatory meetings, and a member of the team had been redeployed to work in the Council's Covid-19 emergency response centre. However, the CFT would continue to work with service colleagues to prevent, detect and investigate suspicion of fraud.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.

## **11. REPORTS RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF THE SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

With reference to Article 7 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 16 June 2020, there was submitted Report No 310/20 by the Service Leader - Internal Audit advising members of reports submitted to other Angus Council committees, the Council, Tayside Contracts and to the Integration Joint Board that were relevant to the work of the Scrutiny and Audit Committee.

Attached as Appendix 1 to the Report was a list of reports submitted to other Angus Council committees and the Integration Joint Board for the period 27 May to 27 October 2020.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the reports listed in Appendix 1 to the Report; and
- (ii) that no further detailed discussion on any of the Reports was required at this time.

## **12. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REQUESTS**

With reference to Article 7 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 25 August 2020, there was submitted Report No 311/20 by the Director of Legal and Democratic Services providing information to members in relation to Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests received by the Council for the period 1 January 2015 until 30 September 2020, including details of the key themes of such requests.

The Report indicated that as part of the consideration of the Annual Governance Statement Assurances, it had been agreed that further information regarding Freedom of Information and Environmental Information requests would be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

Detailed information in relation to the number of requests received, the type of applicants/sources of requests and the key themes were provided within the Report.

Having heard Councillors Whiteside and Duff seek further information in relation to the number and types of requests, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) that a further breakdown of the figures related to the type of applicants/sources of requests would be provided to members in due course.

**13. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK – NATIONAL BENCHMARKING OVERVIEW REPORT 2018-2019 AND PERFORMANCE-LED COUNCIL PROGRAMME UPDATE**

There was submitted Joint Report No 312/0 by the Director of Finance and the Director of Strategic Policy, Transformation and Public Sector Reform advising members of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) - National Benchmarking Overview Report 2018-19 recently published by the Improvement Service. The Report highlighted the key national and local issues emerging from the Overview Report, along with progress being made by Council services in relation to the performance-led programme of improvement work.

The LGBF - National Benchmarking Overview Report 2018-19 report was published by the Improvement Service at the end of January 2020. The LGBF report provided Councils with helpful insight into the national position along with their own performance and provided a strengthened evidence base to help drive improvement, promote collaboration and learning, while strengthening public accountability. Each of the Council's services was actively engaging in this work, and embedding it along with the other improvement activity to ensure it became part of business-as-usual activity.

A summary of the key issues emerging from a review of Angus Council in the LGBF report was detailed in Appendix 1. This presented an overview for each of the seven groupings, along with evidence of how this was being addressed as part of ongoing improvement work. The Committee was asked to consider and scrutinise the LGBF National Benchmarking Overview report, the key issues emerging from Council officers review of that report, including what those were in Angus and how those were being addressed; and the progress that was being made by Council services in relation to the performance-led programme which included utilising the evidence that could be associated with information emerging from the LGBF report findings.

Having heard from Councillors Duff, Devine and Bell regarding the data set and the time delay in the data provided, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the LGBF National Benchmarking Overview Report, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the Report;
- (ii) to note the key issues emerging from Council officers review of the LGBF report, including what these were in Angus and what services were doing to improve further, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report; and
- (iii) to note the progress being made by Council services in relation to the performance-led programme which included utilising the evidence that could be associated with the information emerging from the LGBF report findings.