

## **ANGUS COUNCIL**

MINUTE of HYBRID MEETING of the **SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Tuesday 28 November 2023 at 2.00pm.

**Present:** Councillors CRAIG FOTHERINGHAM, GAVIN NICOL, CHRIS BEATTIE, JULIE BELL, LYNNE DEVINE, HEATHER DORAN, IAIN GALL, ROSS GREIG IAN MCLAREN, RONNIE PROCTOR (MBE), GEORGE MEECHAN, LOIS SPEED AND DEREK WANN.

Councillor FOTHERINGHAM, Convener, in the Chair.

Prior to the commencement of business, the Convener intimated that this was the Chief Executive's last meeting prior to her retirement in December. He indicated that she had been an excellent Leader and that it had been a privilege to work with her during her time as Chief Executive. On behalf of the Committee, he wished her a long, happy and healthy retirement.

### **1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Louise Nicol and Martin Shepherd, with Councillors Ian McLaren and George Meechan substituting respectively.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/STATEMENTS OF TRANSPARENCY**

Councillor Doran made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 5, in that she had recently worked with the Scottish Police Youth Volunteer Group.

### **3. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 October 2023 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

### **4. SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2023 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 22 August 2023, there was submitted Report No 323/23 by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, relating to quarter two (1 July to 30 September) of 2023 on the performance and activities in support of the priorities in the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Angus 2020 and the wider community planning priorities.

Attached as Appendix 1 to the Report was a 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.

Mark Lowe, Group Commander highlighted that the Report did not include information relative to Storm Babet but that this would be presented within the next quarterly report. However, he took the opportunity to pass on his sincere thanks to the local authority team, Police Scotland, the Scottish Ambulance Service and those within the community who had assisted Scottish Fire and Rescue in helping reduce the risk to life by completing some pre-emptive work. He also stated that thoughts were with those people whose homes and businesses were affected and the family and friends of those who tragically lost their lives.

The Group Commander then provided a brief overview of the Report and was also heard in relation to the key performance highlights, performance management targets and the Community Safety Engagement Programmes.

Councillors Proctor, Bell, Greig, Devine, Speed and Beattie raised questions and sought further information in relation to the Young Driver Scheme and timeframes around this and if any engagement with local driving instructors had taken place, audits of short terms lets and if there were concerns arising from these audits, Road Traffic Collisions with electric cars and storage of batteries, concerns with regards fires around the Forfar Loch area and Adult Support Protection. In response, the Local Senior Officer and Group Commander provided informative updates.

Jason Sharp, Local Senior Officer and Mark Lowe, Group Commander confirmed that they would follow up the requests for further information in relation to if there are any trends for Adult Support Protection and take forward the suggestion about engagement with local driving instructors with regards to the New Drivers Scheme.

The Convener took the opportunity to commend the service for their involvement in the vast amount of community events and thereafter, 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 2023 to 30 September 2023.

## **5. POLICE SCOTLAND - ANGUS LOCAL POLICING AREA QUARTERLY REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 JULY 2023 TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2023**

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 22 August 2023, there was submitted Report No 324/23 by Chief Superintendent Phil Davison, which updated the Committee on the performance results for the period 1 July to 30 September 2023.

Appendix A to the Report outlined the performance of Police Scotland and information in relation to some of the work which had taken place within the Angus Local Policing Area. 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.

Superintendent Suzanne Smith, accompanied by Chief Inspector Ross Fitzgerald, Local Area Commander for Angus provided a brief introduction to the Report, thereafter Chief Inspector Ross Fitzgerald provided an informative overview of the Report.

Councillors Bell, Proctor, Greig and Speed raised questions and sought further information in relation to Fraud and if there was a pattern with regards to targeting the elderly, budgeting issues and concerns with regards to what the long-term impacts would be, what sickness absence numbers were in relation to the violence experienced against emergency workers, frustrations with regards to 101 waiting times and different platforms of communication. Superintendent Suzanne Smith and Chief Inspector Ross Fitzgerald, Local Area Commander for Angus provided informative updates and answers.

Councillor Bell, Proctor and Greg raised concerns in relation to Violence against emergency workers and made a plea that citizens be mindful that there was a person behind the uniform. Stating that within their role they would do everything within their abilities as elected members to promote this.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed to note the Angus Local Policing Area Quarterly Police Report for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023.

## **6. NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE – PROGRESS REPORT**

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 27 October 2022, there was submitted Report No 325/23 by the Service Leader - Internal Audit advising members of the progress on the 2022 National Fraud Initiative (NFI).

The Report advised that the Angus Council datasets for the 2022 NFI exercise had been submitted from October 2022, and that the results of the data-matching exercise released from January 2023 onwards. As of 30 September 2023, the Council had received 77 reports with a total of 3,727 individual matches.

Exercise outcomes thus far had identified overpayments of £8,227 from four duplicate payments made to creditors and the cancellation of 279 Blue Badges where the badge holder has passed away. The overpayments identified, totalling £8,227 were being pursued through debt recovery processes.

Participation in NFI was a regular part of the Council's corporate approach to the prevention and detection of fraud and error. Work continued to check the matches received and identify those that required further investigation. The final Angus Council outcomes for NFI 2022 would be submitted to this Committee in due course, together with the Audit Scotland national Report.

Following questions in relation to fraud activity and having heard from the Service Leader – Internal Audit in response, the Committee agreed to note the progress in investigating the matches from the National Fraud Initiative 2022.

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

With reference to Article 9 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 October 2023, there was submitted Report No 326/23 by the Service Leader - Internal Audit providing the Internal Audit Activity update on the main findings of the Internal Audit Reports issued since the date of the last meeting.

The Report provided an update in relation to the Internal Audit activity within the Council and provided an update on progress with the planned audit work, including new audits drawn from the audit pool; and the implementation of internal audit and counter fraud recommendations.

The Service Leader - Internal Audit highlighted progress with the Internal Audit activity, Payroll, Creditors Duplicate Payments, GDPR Compliance in Children, Families and Justice, Overall assessment of Key Controls, Good Practice and, having previously reported a vacancy in the Internal Audit Team, provided the Committee with an update.

Councillors Wann, Bell and Speed raised questions and sought further information in relation to Housing Void Management being on hold and concerns about Voids being reported correctly, Training for the Committee, GDPR compliance and if at home working had created more breaches, and how this is being monitored.

The Service Leader – Internal Audit was heard in response and thereafter, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the update on progress with the planned Internal Audit work, as outlined in Appendix 1 to the Report;
- (ii) to note management's progress in implementing internal audit and counter fraud recommendations, as outlined in Appendix 1 to the Report; and
- (iii) to note that revised Global Internal Audit Standards would be published early in 2024 with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards revised thereafter, and that changes to some aspects of the Council's documentation and procedures relating to Internal Audit would be required.

## **8. DETAILED RISK REPORTING TO SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 October 2023, there was submitted Report No 327/23 by the Service Leader - Internal Audit presenting detailed risk information to members in line with the programme agreed by the Committee in June 2023.

The Report detailed the timetable for individual risk presentations, based on the Corporate Risk Register as of 9 May 2023.

The Chief Executive was heard in relation Transforming for the Future and the risk in terms of the Council failing to transform its services and how it delivers on its priorities and its finances. She indicated that there were a number of controls in place however the risk was still high mainly as a result of demand versus finances available. The list of controls were detailed in the Report, some of which were recognised as sector leading. Some further actions were required to look at reform and change while taking into consideration the necessity for collaboration or commissioning elsewhere within the public sector.

Councillors Greig, Devine, Wann, Speed and Doran raised questions and sought further information in relation to the latest Council Tax freeze and the implications this would have in relation to current pressures, impacts on individual towns and communities, when reporting to Scottish Government was this reflecting an accurate picture, and what would happen if the Council became financially competent but was not delivering statutory duties. Thereafter, the Chief Executive was heard in response.

The Committee agreed to note the information presented in relation to the Transforming for the Future risk.

*At this point the Director of Finance joined the meeting.*

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

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 15 June 2023, there was submitted Report No 328/23 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 covering the period 12 May 2023 to 19 October 2023.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the Reports as outlined in Appendix 1 to the Report; and
- (ii) to determine that no further detailed discussion on any of the Reports 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 15 June 2023, there was submitted Report No 329/23 by the Service Leader - Internal Audit, providing a summary of the work undertaken by the Corporate Fraud Team (CFT) during the six months to 30 September 2023.

During the period to 30 September 2023, the Corporate Fraud Team identified losses in excess of £27k (same period 2022 £63k) from investigative work. This did not include future losses which would have accrued without CFT intervention. Action had been taken by the Council to recover these monies and where successful, the recovery of amounts resulted in income for the Council.

Additional financial benefits had accrued by the Corporate Fraud Team's work in disrupting fraudulent activity, preventing fraud awareness action and by improving internal controls.

The Service Leader – Internal Audit provided an update and highlighted the key areas of the Report.

Councillors Bell, Nicoll and Meechan raised questions and sought further information in relation to Corporate Fraud and if any Criminal charges had followed Dismissal, if investigations complied with RIPSAs regulations and if there had been any valuation done with regards to the costs involved versus the amount of recovery, and heard from Ewan Ritchie, Team Leader and the Service Leader – Internal Audit in response.

The Committee, having scrutinised, agreed to note the contents of the Report.

## **11. CHANGE PROGRAMME UPDATE**

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of 31 January 2023, there was submitted Report No 292/23 by the Director of Legal, Governance and Change, providing a progress update in relation to the Council's Change Programme, relating to the 3-year planning period (2023/24 to 2025/26).

The Report indicated that work had continued to monitor and scrutinise progress with the Change Programme and individual projects with any issues being reported to the Change Board. Particular emphasis remained on delivering the 2023/24 savings to secure the maximum value of the £13.327m savings that had been targeted, and to identify any remedial action required to mitigate risk of delivery, where applicable.

This amended position was mainly due to a full assessment of each project being undertaken to measure the deliverability of the full savings target. Details of these variances were explained in Section 5.2 of the Report.

The Director of Finance provided a brief and informative update.

The Committee agreed to note the progress update in relation to the Council's current Change Programme (2023/24 to 2025/26), along with the summary included in Appendix 1 to the Report.