

CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY PLANNING
STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 2nd December 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Brian Connolly (Chair), Mairi Low, Helen Moonie, Alec Oattes and Mike Peddie.

Apologies: Councillors Sandra Goldie, Bill Grant and John Hampton.

Attending: E. Howat, Executive Director – Corporate Services; L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Development and Environment; V. Andrews, Head of Legal and Administration; D. Alexander, Head of Corporate Resources (via webcam); H. Carswell, Head of Children’s Services; H. McLaughlin, Audit Services/Programme Review Manager; E. Monson, Neighbourhood Services Manager; P. Linton, Performance and Change Management Manager; A. MacLeod, Business and Performance Manager; S. Macdonald, Waste Strategy Group Leader; and E. Wyllie, Committee Administration Officer.

Also Attending: Councillors Bill McIntosh and Robin Reid (Portfolio-holders) and Asif Haseeb, Senior Audit Manager and Anne Cairns, Senior Auditor, Audit Scotland.

1. Items for Call-in.

The Panel noted that there had been no call-ins for this meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting.

Decided: to note the Minutes of the previous meeting of 4th November 2010 (issued).

3. Variation in order of business.

In terms of Council Standing Order No. 10, the Panel agreed to vary the order of business as hereinafter minuted.

AUDIT FUNCTION:-

4. Report to Management on International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Opening Balance Sheet Review.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 23rd November 2010 by the Head of Corporate Resources

- (1) outlining the findings from a review of the Council’s progress in relation to the implementation of International Financial Reporting Standards;
- (2) advising that the Auditors, as detailed within their report attached as an Appendix to the report, had found that the Council had been proactive in its approach to the adoption of IFRS and had been able to provide Audit Scotland with the restated opening balance sheet and supporting documentation as required prior to the completion of the 2009/10 closedown work; and

- (3) concluding that the Council was well placed to produce the shadow accounts for 2009/10 which would be used as prior year comparators for the 2010/11 accounts.

The Chair invited the Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland to comment on the report who then proceeded to highlight that this was a positive report with good progress continuing to be made by the Finance team.

A question was raised by a Member of the Panel in relation to leases classifications and the Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland responded accordingly.

Decided: having thanked Mr. Haseeb for his input

- (a) to note the Auditors' conclusion in relation to progression of IFRS to date; and
- (b) to agree that progression of further IFRS requirements would be reported to a future meeting of this Panel.

WIDER SCRUTINY PANEL BUSINESS:-

5. Progress Against the Council Corporate Plan to 30th September 2010.

Reference was made to the Minutes of the Leadership Panel of 8th June 2010 (Page 313, paragraph 13) when that Panel, having considered a report of 28th May 2010 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication advising of the progress achieved to date against the Council Corporate Plan's aims and objectives, had agreed

- (1) to note the progress achieved over 2009/10 against the Council Corporate Plan as set out in the table at 4.2 of the report and Appendix 1 attached to the report; and
- (2) to note that detailed performance reports were to be considered at Standing Scrutiny Panels, and

there was submitted a report (issued) of 16th November 2010 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication outlining the progress which had been achieved to date against the Council Corporate Plan in relation to the Directorate objectives and tasks which had fallen within this Panel's remit.

The Performance and Change Management Manager referred to the recent workshop attended by Panel Members and invited comment on the content of the Plan. He also circulated responses (tabled) to a series of questions raised at the workshop pertaining to the Children and Community Directorate and the Head of Children's Services referred to these and asked if Members wished any further clarification on the information contained therein.

With reference to these responses, various questions were raised by Members of the Panel in relation to:- whether there was a corporate policy on costing options for FOI enquiries and on the need for a consistent approach across the Council; whether information was available on the amount of time spent on handling FOIs and associated costs; how many processed FOIs had had a charge attached; ways in which to reduce the need for FOI enquiries by making sure access to information was widely available; and the internal review process and the relevant officers responded accordingly. The Head of Legal and Administration agreed to provide a Briefing to Members for their information, setting out the costing options relating to FOI requests and the statistics relating to the frequency of this. The Head of Children's Services advised that, although he was aware that no FOI enquiries had been to internal review for his section, he would ascertain if there had been any across the rest of the Directorate and advise Members accordingly.

A further question was raised by a Member of the Panel in relation to class structures and sizes and roll projections (CC11c05.05) and how this would be achieved and the Performance and Change Management Manager advised that he would ask the relevant officer to provide a written response to Members on this matter. The Chair suggested that on receipt of this response, if there were any outstanding issues for Members, then these could be discussed at the next meeting of the Panel.

Decided:

- (a) to note the progress achieved to date against the Council Corporate Plan as detailed through the updates provided against its Directorate Plans to 30th September 2010; and
- (b) that Officers would arrange to circulate information on questions raised at this meeting with the opportunity for further discussion to be undertaken at a future meeting of this Panel if required.

6. Improvement Agenda Strand 2: Strategic Planning.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 22nd November 2010 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication

- (1) providing information in respect of developing the Council's approach to strategic planning to support this Panel's scrutiny of Improvement Strand 2; and
- (2) detailing the progress being made in respect of developing strategic planning within South Ayrshire and highlighting that two commitments remained from the original Improvement Agenda which would now be addressed as part of the Council's future Improvement Programme as follows:-
 - an overarching Council Vision and Community Plan; and
 - integration of resource planning with Directorate Plans.

A comment was raised by a Member of the Panel in relation to challenges being faced in respect of aligning priorities with directorate plans and the Executive Director – Corporate Services responded accordingly.

Decided: to note the progress in relation to Improvement Strand 2 – Strategic Planning

C

7. Panel Work Programme.

Reference was made to the Minutes of 4th November 2010 (Page 588, paragraph 11(2)) and there was submitted a report (issued) of 23rd November 2010 by the Executive Director – Corporate Services seeking agreement of the 2011/12 Panel Work Programme.

The Executive Director – Corporate Services

- (1) indicated that, following on from the discussion at the previous meeting, she had received feedback from a Member of the Panel in relation to whether a review of estates could also be undertaken as well as procurement; however, she advised that this could be too much to tackle at this particular time and suggested that this be an area for future review; and
- (2) commented that, if acceptable, she would prepare a report on procurement for the next meeting of the Panel and asked if it was the intention that one of the Sub-Groups would take this work forward.

Various comments were made by Members of the Panel in relation to the continuing use of both Sub-Groups and their membership and whether the role of Sub-Group Chair should be held rotationally. The Chair reminded Members that although these had been divided into two working groups, any Member was welcome to attend either Sub-Group should they wish and highlighted that, where possible, he would also attend Sub-Group meetings.

Thereon, a discussion took place in respect of a Chair for the new Sub-Group on procurement when Councillor Moonie was nominated for this position.

Decided: to agree that the 2011/12 work programme should focus on:-

- (a) completion of the review of the role of the Audit Committee by January/February 2011;
- (b) completion of the review of communication/community engagement;
- (c) quarterly updates on absence management; and
- (d) a review of procurement to be undertaken by the Sub-Group chaired by Councillor Moonie and to note that, prior to the next meeting, the Head of Corporate Resources would discuss Terms of Reference with her.

AUDIT FUNCTION:-

8. Exclusion of press and public.

The Panel resolved, in terms of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, that the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item of business on the agenda, on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information in terms of paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

9. Internal Audit Service – Follow-up of Internal Audit Reports – Progress Report – Continuous Audit – Orders (2010/66).

Reference was made to the Minutes of 4th November 2010 (Page 585, paragraph 5) when that Panel had decided to continue consideration of the Continuous Audit – Orders (2010/66) to this Panel for further consideration.

The Audit Services/Programme Review Manager outlined the background in relation to this matter.

A full discussion took place when clarification was sought and questions were asked in relation to this matter and the relevant Officers responded accordingly and the Executive Director – Development and Environment also commented on the course of action. The Executive Director – Corporate Services suggested that she would circulate a reinforced message reminding Officers of the requirement to adhere to stipulated procedural documents when processing contracts and commented that she would do so in conjunction with the Chair of this Panel, given the Panel’s responsibility as Audit Committee.

Decided: following a full discussion

- (1) to note the concerns of the Members of the Panel in respect of this matter;
- (2) to acknowledge the assurances provided by the relevant Officers and the Executive Director – Development and Environment; and
- (3) that the Executive Director – Corporate Services would circulate a reinforced message, expressing the concerns of this Panel as Audit Committee, and reminding Officers of the requirement to adhere to appropriate procedures when processing contracts.

10. Closing remarks.

The Chair wished everyone a happy Christmas and New Year.

The meeting ended at 11.25 a.m.