

**SOUTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL (SPECIAL).**

Minutes of special meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,  
on 22nd April 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Helen Moonie (Provost), John Allan, Andy Campbell, Douglas Campbell, Ian Cavana, Alec Clark, Brian Connolly, Peter Convery, Kirsty Darwent, Allan Dorans, Ian Douglas, Ann Galbraith, Sandra Goldie, Bill Grant, William J. Grant, John Hampton, Hugh Hunter, Mary Kilpatrick, John McDowall, Nan McFarlane, Brian McGinley, Bill McIntosh, Rita Miller, Alec Oattes, Robin Reid, Philip Saxton, Margaret Toner and Corri Wilson.

Apologies: Councillors Ian Cochrane and Hywel Davies.

Attending: E. Howat, Chief Executive; V. Andrews, Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation; L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment; K. Leinster, Head of Community Care and Housing; and D. Knight, Democratic Services Administrator.

Also attending: D. Richardson, Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

**1. Provost.**

The Provost

- (1) welcomed everyone to the special meeting; and
- (2) intimated that apologies had been received from Councillors Ian Cochrane and Hywel Davies.

**2. Sederunt.**

The Chief Executive called the Sederunt for the meeting.

**3. Declarations of Interest.**

There were no declarations of interest by Members of the Council in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

#### 4. Targeted Best Value Audit Work / Accounts Commission Findings.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 7th April 2014 ([link attached](#)) by the Chief Executive requesting that the Council consider the Accounts Commission's findings and agree an improvement action plan.

The Chief Executive advised that the Accounts Commission had accepted the Controller of Audit's report on the targeted Best Value audit highlighting its concerns regarding leadership and culture, performance management and scrutiny in South Ayrshire Council and that the improvement work underway would ensure that the right processes and performance monitoring were in place and would continue to provide the services and facilities that communities deserved.

The Chief Executive intimated that a number of questions had been submitted to her at the start of the meeting. They were tabled and circulated for ease of reference by all Members. Answers were provided by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council as follows:-

<b>Audit Scotland</b>	<b>Questions and Answers</b>
Audit Scotland's Recommendations (ASR1)	<p>ASR comment states "Fully implement the previous agreed recommendations. Since the initial response to the Best Value Audit in 2009, the Council has made a number of commitments towards achieving Best Value".</p> <p>What steps have been taken to ensure that all these comments have been concluded or work in progress?</p> <p><i>The Chief Executive advised that she and the Executive Directors were currently reviewing all previous audit recommendations and agreed improvements.</i></p> <p>In the initial response the Council described the type of organisation it sought to become.</p> <p>Are these descriptors still valid and if so, what assessment has been made as to progress in achieving the set objectives?</p> <p><i>The Leader of the Council advised that in relation to its Best Value responsibility, the Council would strive to sustain Continuous Improvement and to address the major challenges facing the Council</i></p> <p>If the descriptors are no longer valid, what type of organisation do we seek to become?</p> <p><i>See above.</i></p>

ASR2	<p>The Care, Learning and Wellbeing Directorate has been praised in the use of HGIOC in assessing and reporting on performance. Will other Directorates use the same template when compiling Service Plans for consideration?</p> <p><i>The Chief Executive advised that the HGIOC template used by Care, Learning and Wellbeing would be rolled out across all Directorates.</i></p>
ASR3	<p>To ask the Chief Executive how the PDR will be adapted to meet Audit Scotland's recommendations?</p> <p><i>The Chief Executive advised that her Appraisal was taking place on 29th April 2014 and would be adapted to reflect the Strategic Objectives and thereafter, all staff would have Performance and Development Reviews, including clear forward objectives reflecting the new corporate and service plans.</i></p>
Accounts Commission's Findings (ACF2)	<p>What is the remit of the Best Value Working Group?</p> <p><i>The Chief Executive advised that the remit of the Working Group was still being considered but it would be a short life Working Group to support Best Value being embedded across the Council.</i></p> <p>Why is the Chair of the Corporate and Community Planning Standing Scrutiny Panel / Audit Committee not a member?</p> <p><i>The Leader of the Council advised that members of the Working Group had been proposed to reflect the political position, and to include one Independent Member.</i></p>
ACF3 / ACF9	<p>The suggested actions make no reference to the Councillors' response to providing strong strategic leadership.</p> <p>To ask how the report will be adjusted to include this aspect?</p> <p><i>The Chief Executive advised that the senior management structure required to be reviewed.</i></p> <p><i>The Leader of the Council advised that it was the responsibility of all Councillors to provide strong strategic leadership and to ensure that the Council has the senior management capacity to support change and sustain improvement.</i></p>

ACF4	<p>The Account Commission expect an alternative style of leadership.</p> <p>How will the Council determine a clear and shared understanding and demonstrate that to the Accounts Commission?</p> <p><i>The Chief Executive advised that an Elected Members' Briefing on Roles and Responsibilities would be provided by the Improvement Service on 14th May 2014.</i></p>
ACF5	<p>Does the Chief Executive intend to hold a seminar on the revised scrutiny arrangements prior to the Council on 3rd July 2014?</p> <p><i>The Chief Executive advised that she would be happy to organise a Seminar on the revised scrutiny arrangements.</i></p>

Clarification was sought and provided that the Chief Executive had met with representatives from the Accounts Commission and Audit Scotland but that a summary of the Council's decisions had not yet been sent to them, that all Officers on the Corporate Management Team (CMT) worked together and that a CMT Charter was currently being developed with corporate standards being reinforced and delivered across all services, the ongoing review of scrutiny arrangements, that funds had been set aside in the Revenue Budget to establish a Business Improvement Team to help managers and staff review process, refine operating arrangements and explore alternative business models, all with a view to transforming and improving services and the way the Council worked. The Chief Executive indicated that she had been encouraged by the level of response from staff to join this team.

The Council was advised that the Working Group would be short term and that improvements would be embedded into systems.

The Chief Executive indicated that she was currently in dialogue with Chief Executives from other Local Authorities which had been highlighted as good examples of the Best Value culture.

The Council welcomed the establishment of Elected Members' Briefings and noted that the Improvement Service would be available to provide support and advice as necessary.

A Member of the Council intimated that the Council needed to determine what kind of organisation it wanted to be and to ensure that Officers delivered Best Value.

The Council noted the seriousness of the Accounts Commission's findings and discussed the important role of Elected Members to improve the organisation.

The Council noted the need for strong leadership to support change and improve performance management and scrutiny in South Ayrshire Council.

**Decided:**

- (1) to note the findings of the Targeted Best Value Audit work – South Ayrshire Council;
- (2) to accept the recommendations / findings made by Audit Scotland / Accounts Commission and to approve the Council's response as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (3) to approve the improvement action plan as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report to address the recommendations / findings;
- (4) to approve the arrangements for monitoring and reporting on progress on the improvement action plan as outlined at section 4.4 of the report;
- (5) to request that a summary of the Council's decisions in respect of the Targeted Best Value Audit work be sent to the Accounts Commission for approval and subsequent publication; and
- (6) to approve the formation of a Working Group of Members (one from each of Conservative, Labour and SNP Groups and Independents) and Officers as outlined at sections 4.5 and 4.6 of the report to evaluate and to keep under review the Council's approach to ensuring the delivery of Best Value.

**Councillor Goldie left the meeting from 10.25 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. during consideration of the foregoing item.**

**5. Formal Questions.**

The Council were advised that no formal questions had been submitted to this meeting.

The meeting ended at 10.40 a.m.