

CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY PLANNING
STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 25th August 2011 at 10.00 a.m.

- Present: Councillors Brian Connolly (Chair), Sandra Goldie, John Hampton, Mairi Low, Helen Moonie and Alec Oattes.
- Apologies: Councillors Bill Grant and Mike Peddie.
- Attending: E. Howat, Executive Director – Corporate Services; V. Andrews, Head of Legal and Administration; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Performance and Communication; H. McLaughlin, Audit Services/Programme Review Manager; D. Alexander, Head of Corporate Resources; T. Baulk, Chief Accounting Officer; C. Gardner, Senior Strategic Planning and Performance Management Officer; A. Greenwood, Asset Co-ordinator; and D. Knight, Committee Services Officer.
- Also Attending: Councillors Bill McIntosh and Robin Reid (Portfolio-holders); and Anne Cairns, Senior Auditor, Audit Scotland.

1. Item 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 23rd June 2011 (issued).

AUDIT FUNCTION:-

3. Internal Audit Service – Follow-up of Internal Audit Reports – Progress Report.

There was submitted a report (issued) of August 2011 by the Audit Services / Programme Review Manager

- (1) advising of the current status of Directorate progress regarding the implementation of Action Plans contained within internal audit reports;
- (2) informing that, as at 12th August 2011, CPMS was showing three action plan points, due to be implemented by 30th June 2011, which were still outstanding and reporting that extension requests had been received and agreed by Internal Audit for all of these actions; and
- (3) intimating that since the previous meeting of this Panel, five reports had been issued and that a summary of these reports had been included as Appendices to the report.

A question was raised by a Member of the Panel enquiring whether the SPT grant claims represented Value for Money for the Council and the Audit Services / Programme Review Manager responded accordingly and a concern was expressed by a Member of the Panel regarding the subsidies provided to Stagecoach and the Executive Director - Corporate Services advised that this matter would need to be raised with the SPT.

Decided:

- (a) to note the progress of Directorates in the implementation of agreed action plan findings; and
- (b) to request the Audit Services / Programme Review Manager to submit agreed reports to future meetings of this Panel.

4. Internal Audit Service - Annual Report to Council 2010/11.

There was submitted a report (issued) of August 2011 by the Audit Services / Programme Review Manager advising of the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Service during 2010/11 as outlined in the Appendix to the report.

A question was raised by a Member of the Panel enquiring where the final settlement received from Transport Scotland in the sum of £698,000 had been allocated and the Executive Director - Corporate Services responded accordingly.

Decided: having recorded their appreciation of the work that had been undertaken by the Audit Services / Programme Review Manager and his staff

- (1) to note the contents of this report; and
- (2) to request the Audit Services / Programme Review Manager to ensure that Internal Audit reported on matters arising from work on the 2011/12 Annual Audit Plan.

5. Follow Up of External Audit reports – Progress to 30th June 2011.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 17th August 2011 by the Executive Director - Corporate Services

- (1) providing an update on the progress being made by the Council in completing its external audit improvement actions from 1st February to 30th June 2011;
- (2) advising that, during the reporting period, twenty-one actions had been brought to completion, the majority of these from 2010, with a further twenty-three actions continuing to progress in line with their original targets; and
- (3) outlining the ten actions 'on revised target' with the profile of these extensions highlighted within Appendix 1 of the report.

Decided: to note the progress being made against the Council's external audit improvement actions as presented in Appendix 1 of the report.

WIDER SCRUTINY PANEL BUSINESS:-

6. Treasury Management Annual Report 2010/11.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 16th August 2011 by the Executive Director - Corporate Services presenting the Annual Report of treasury management activities for 2010/11, in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management, as detailed in the Appendix to the report and seeking approval of its contents.

Various questions were raised by Members of the Panel in relation to the down grading of some countries currencies and the impact that this could have on this Council and whether the Executive Director - Corporate Services could explore the feasibility of making deposits in Norwegian Banks and the Executive Director responded accordingly.

Decided: to note the contents of the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2010/11, as attached as Appendix 1 of the report, with this report being referred to the next meeting of the Council on 6th October 2011 for approval.

7. Annual Statutory Reporting of Performance Information.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 17th August 2011 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication detailing the Council's performance to 31st March 2011 against the indicators selected for statutory reporting purposes which fell within this Panel's remit.

The Head of Policy, Performance and Communication referred to the workshop that had been held with the Panel members on 17th August 2011 which covered a number of points and issues in relation to the measures that could be dealt with there and then and identified a list of further areas where more information was required to allow scrutiny at this meeting.

Based on this, a paper had been circulated to Members that gave further information on a number of these areas that required further scrutiny.

The Head of Policy, Performance and Communication suggested that Members worked through the list of comments which had been made at the workshop in respect of specific indicators as follows:-

- an explanation of what the delays had been in relation to the percentage of Council buildings in which all public areas were suitable for and accessible to disabled people and what impact they have had with a view to seeing how slippage could be reduced in the future (SA11c100.3);
- provision of details relating to the number of educational establishments which were accessible to people with disabilities falling into each bands and what the shifts had been from 2009/10 to 2010/11 (SA11c103.1-4);
- provision of details relating to the suitability of school buildings (percentage rated in each category) falling into each category and what the shifts had been from 2009/10 to 2010/11 (SA11c107.1-4);
- provision of details relating to the condition of school buildings (percentage rated in each category) falling into each category and what the shifts had been from 2009/10 to 2010/11 (SA11c107.5-8);

- provision of details for the ‘further savings for 2011/12 being progressed’ in relation to procurement (SA14f121); and
- a further explanation of how despite the indicator relating to the average days per employee lost through sickness for other employees showing a slight increase ‘the overall trend continued to be one of reduced levels of absence’ (SA14f134.6).

The Estates Manager outlined the position in relation to a number of questions that had been raised by Members of the Panel about the delay in works to Council buildings to ensure compliance with the requirements of Disability Discrimination Act and how the proposed legislation regarding disabled access would impact on the future work to Council buildings.

The Head of Corporate Resources tabled a note providing details of the Procurement Efficiencies Allocation for 2010/11, and following questions from Members of this Panel, outlined the procedures in place for advertising tenders and support and advice that was being given to Small to Medium Enterprises.

A question was raised by a Member of the Panel in relation to whether grant funding was provided for the provision of free fruit in schools.

The Chair referred to the ongoing work programme of the Procurement Working Group.

The Head of Policy, Performance and Communication, following a question from a Member of the Panel, explained the position with regard to the definition of “other employees” in terms of sickness monitoring.

Decided:

- (a) to note the performance as outlined in Appendix A of the report; and
- (b) to agree that the Executive Director – Corporate Services would circulate a note to the Panel advising whether any grants were received by the Council in connection with the provision of free fruit for schools.

8. Panel Work Programme – Role of the Audit Panel Working Group.

In the absence of Councillor Peddie, Councillor Connolly provided an update on the work of the Role of the Audit Panel Working Group and referred to the draft handbook which, when completed, would be submitted to a future meeting of the Leadership Panel for its consideration.

Decided: to note the position.

The meeting ended at 10.50 p.m.