

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE PANEL.

Minutes of a hybrid webcast meeting on 6 November 2024 at 10.00 a.m.

Present in
County Hall: Councillors Julie Dettbarn (Chair), Chris Cullen, Alan Lamont, Brian McGinley, Cameron Ramsay and George Weir.

Present
Remotely: Councillor Mary Kilpatrick

Also
Present
Remotely: Councillor Ian Cochrane (for item 2 only)

Apology: Councillor Kenneth Bell

Attending in
County Hall: W. Carlaw, Service Lead – Democratic Governance; T. Baulk Chief Financial Officer; C. Caves, Chief Governance Officer; T. Eltringham, Director of Health & Social Care; G. Hunter – Assistant Director, Communities; J. Tait, Service Lead – Thriving Communities; J. Bradley, Director of Communities & Transformation; C. McGhee, Chief Internal Auditor; J. Butchart, Committee Services Officer; and E. Moore, Clerical Assistant.

Attending
Remotely: M. Newall, Chief Executive; and L. Duncan, Chief Finance Officer, Health and Social Care.

Opening Remarks.

The Chair

- (1) welcomed everyone to the meeting; and
- (2) outlined the procedures for conducting this meeting and advised that this meeting would be broadcast live.

1. Sederunt and Declarations of Interest.

The Chair called the Sederunt for the meeting and, having called the roll, confirmed that there were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. Call-in from Cabinet of 29 October 2024 “Community Councils - Amendments to the Scheme for Establishment of Community Councils”

Reference was made to the Minutes of the Cabinet of 29 October 2024 (Page 2, paragraph 4) where the Cabinet decided

- (1) to update the Scheme for Establishment to reflect administrative changes to the Scheme as highlighted in red in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (2) to approve the name of Dunure Community Council to be changed to Fisherton and Dunure Community Council following a request from Dunure Community Council.

The Panel was advised that the decision had been the subject of a call-in.

Councillor Cochrane spoke to the call-in and advised that, as the Cabinet was formed by the Administration and was a political forum this opened up the Council to accusations of political bias. He further advised that the call in proposed the substitution of the word “Council” for the word “Cabinet” where it occurred in the Report in relation to dissolution of a Community Council. The Chief Governance Officer advised that the call-in was competent and that it would be a decision for Members as to whether the more appropriate decision making forum was Council rather than the Cabinet. She also stated that the Scheme of Delegation would require to be amended if the motion was approved.

A Member enquired about the process involved in dissolving a Community Council prior to it being heard at the Cabinet; and The Service Lead - Thriving Communities advised that the Scheme of Establishment had been approved in 2020 and requests came direct from Community Councils and were then brought to Cabinet to be approved. He also outlined that all Community Council Chairs and Secretaries had been invited to a meeting the following day to discuss a proposal to review the Scheme in 2025.

Following a query by a Member, about Community Council consultation in relation to proposed changes to the Scheme, the Chief Governance Officer clarified that in this case, the proposed changes in the report were administrative changes to reflect internal governance arrangements. within the Council, and as such were matters of fact and could not be changed and as a result, consultation was not appropriate.

A Member requested reassurance that administrative changes would not be applied unduly in the future. The Service Lead - Thriving Communities agreed and advised that there was a positive relationship with the South Ayrshire Community Councils.

A Member queried the decision for Cabinet to be used within the Scheme of Delegations when dealing with Community Councils and if previously it was Council and also enquired about the way such changes would be dealt with going forward. The Service Lead - Democratic Governance responded saying that historically the Public Processes Panel had dealt with Community Council business, however, this no longer existed and that there was a specific Delegation in the Scheme of Delegation at 4.4.3 which was the reasoning for Cabinet.

A Member stated that it was helpful that a clear process for dissolution of a Community Council had been set out, though given the seriousness of the issue, it was anticipated that such a decision would be a matter of last resort.

The Panel

Decided: to approve the recommendation for the report of 29 October 2024 to be brought back to Cabinet and the word “Council” to be substituted for the word “Cabinet” where it occurred in the report in relation to any proposed dissolution of a Community Council; and that corresponding changes to the Council’s governance documents reflect this change.

3. Minutes of Previous Meetings.

The Minutes of the meetings of 26 September 2024 (issued) and 2 October 2024 (issued) were submitted and approved.

4. Action Log and Work Programme.

There was submitted an update of the Action Log and Work Programme for this Panel (issued).

A Member enquired if items 4 and 5 would be brought to the December meeting of the Audit & Governance Panel. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed they would be.

The Panel

Decided: to note the current status of the Action Log and Work Programme.

Internal Audit

5. Internal Audit Plan 2024/25 Midyear review

There was submitted a report (issued) of 25 October 2024 by the Chief Internal Auditor which sought approval for a revision to the 2024/25 Internal Audit plan.

A Member enquired if resources became available would items which were being proposed to be dropped be revisited. The Chief Internal Auditor advised that the reserve list would be looked at if resources became available.

A Member enquired about follow up reviews and participatory budgets and asked if this would go onto the reserve list. The Chief Internal Auditor advised that when this was concluded the action dates agreed fell into 2005/26 so could not be followed up this year, however it would be included in next year’s plan.

A Member asked for re-assurances with regard to absenteeism, that the Department had been receiving support and assistance from Human Resources .. The Chief Internal Auditor confirmed support had been put in place and issues had been addressed.

The Panel

Decided: to approve the revised 2024/25 Internal Audit plan.

6. Internal Audit – Progress Report (Quarter 2 2024/25)

There was submitted a report (issued) of 25 October 2024 by the Chief Internal Auditor advising Members of progress of the 2023/24 internal audit plan, progress of the 2024/25 internal audit plan, directorate's progress against implementation of internal audit action plans and the status of the current Quality Assurance and Improvement Action Plan.

A Member requested clarification as to whether the twenty eight deliverable assignments mentioned on page 3, item 4.8 comprised the list at appendix 2. The Chief Internal Auditor confirmed the twenty eight items on the list were the deliverable assignments where an audit report with an assurance would be produced.

A Member commented on the progress of the EE mast at Riverside Place and enquired if there was any further update on this. The Chief Internal Auditor advised there was no update and this was the latest position, however, she would go back to the relevant department and enquire if they had any further update.

The Panel

Decided: to approve the report.

External Audit

7. South Ayrshire IJB External Annual Audit Report 2023-24

There was submitted a report (issued) of 25 October 2024 by the Director of Health and Social Care Partnership presenting Audit Scotland's Annual Audit Report on South Ayrshire IJB's Annual Accounts for the period 2023-24.

A Member enquired about the underspend due to unfilled vacancies and asked if there was a plan to fill these vacancies. The Director of Health and Social Care confirmed that progress had been made this year and that most posts with Allied Health Professionals had been filled, however there was a challenge in recruiting and retaining care at home staff and currently had a 5% shortfall. He also advised that the Health & Social Care Partnership was forecasting a modest overspend this year. The Chief Financial Officer, Health & Social Care confirmed there was a £1 million overspend and that the main pressure going into 2025/26 was residential care demand, mental health funding and a reduction in multi discipline team funding.

A Member asked for clarification on the national performance measures at exhibit 5 and how these were being impacted upon and what the other pressing needs were. The Director of Health and Social Care confirmed that although there had been marginal improvement there was still work to be done. He advised that work was ongoing with Ayr and Crosshouse Hospitals to look at the development of a frailty ward.

The Panel

Decided to:

- (1) consider the Annual Audit report of South Ayrshire IJB for period 2023-24
- (2) note the contents of the Annual Audit report for 2023-24.

The meeting ended at 11.15 a.m.

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