

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE PANEL.

Minutes of a hybrid webcast meeting on 8 November 2023 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: Kenneth Bell and Mary Kilpatrick.

Attending in
County Hall: M. Newall, Chief Executive; T. Baulk, Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement; W. Carlaw, Service Lead – Democratic Governance; C. Boyd, Service Lead - Risk and Safety; C. McGhee, Chief Internal Auditor; A Gibson, Committee Services Officer; and E. Moore, Clerical Assistant.

Opening Remarks.

The Chair

- (1) welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Councillor Lamont, who was attending his first meeting of this Panel; 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-ins from Cabinet.

The Panel noted that there were no call-ins from Cabinet of 31 October 2023.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meetings.**

The Minutes of the meetings of [27 September](#) (Special) and [4 October 2023](#) (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](#)).

The Head of Finance, ICT and Procurement advised that, in relation to the Action Log, the Members Briefing on the work of the Corporate Fraud Team had now taken place and that a report was on the agenda for this meeting relating to risk implications detailed within Panel reports.

Following a question from a Member regarding the Action Log, it was noted that the Corporate Fraud Team did not provide a service to organisations outwith the Council.

In relation to the Work Programme, a Member of the Panel enquired if the report relating to the Delivery of Good Governance could be reported six-monthly instead of yearly, the Service Lead – Democratic Governance advised that this would not be possible.

The Panel

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

5. **Internal Audit - Progress Report (i) Progress of Annual Internal Audit Plan 2022/23 (ii) Progress of the Annual Internal Audit Plan 2023/24 (iii) Implementation of Internal Audit Action Plans; and (iv) Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme Update.**

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 31 October 2023 by the Chief Internal Auditor advising of progress of the 2022/23 internal audit plan, progress of the 2023/24 internal audit plan, directorates' progress against implementation of internal audit action plans and the status of the current Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme.

After having heard a Member of the Panel ask for a definition of “deliverables” as mentioned in the report, the Chief Internal Auditor advised that it could be defined as an assignment that would have an audit report at the end of it. It was further noted that although thirty deliverables were stated in the report, this number could vary throughout the year.

Following a question from a Member of the Panel, it was noted that that the Chief Internal Auditor was confident that the tasks which had not yet started could still be delivered within timescales subject to there being no large scale investigations required.

A Member of the Panel enquired why it had been stated that the implementation of certain actions relating to schools had been disrupted due to school strikes as the said strikes had not been for any significant period of time. The Chief Internal Auditor advised that as the Head Teachers were responsible for implementing the actions she believed the strikes did have an effect on completion

A Member of the Panel advised that the Council still required to influence more proactively some of the procedures that were not working as well as they should. Having heard various officers, it was noted that matters brought to the Council's attention by Internal Audit and Audit Scotland would be dealt with timeously.

Having heard a Member of the Panel, it was noted that final audit reports were issued to appropriate Council officers and that a SharePoint link was provided to all Elected Members to allow them to view the reports.

The Chief Internal Auditor advised that she would review how the status of actions was presented in future reports to Panel.

The Panel adjourned at this point for a short period.

Following a question from a Member of the Panel regarding a referral for an investigation, as detailed within the report, which had not yet concluded, it was noted that this had now been finalised and was unsubstantiated.

The Panel

Decided: to note the contents of the report.

6. Internal Audit Plan 2023/24 – Midyear Review.

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 31 October 2023 by the Chief Internal Auditor seeking approval for a revision to the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan, as detailed within paragraph 4.1.2 of the report.

Having heard a Member of the Panel raise the number of days allocated within the approved plan for the follow-up assignments, the Chief Internal Auditor advised of the position.

Having heard a Member of the Panel advise that this report had a status column but no progress column, it was agreed that the Chief Internal Auditor would update this for the next time this report was presented to Panel.

The Panel

Decided: to approve the revised 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan.

7. Risk Implications - Panel Reports.

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 31 October 2023 by the Head of Legal and Regulatory Services providing an update on a review to ascertain if the 'Risk Implications' detailed in Council/Panel reports were being used successfully.

There was discussion, including the matter of an identified risk which had been reported in a report that had become apparent; whether risk reporting was successful; the issue of reported risks not all being of equal value; and that the review had covered Council and Cabinet meetings but not the Scrutiny Panels.

After a Member of the Panel raised how matters would now be taken forward, following the presentation of this report, it was noted that significant risks were reported through Strategic and Directorate risk registers.

Having considered the analysis of 'risk implications' in sample Council and Cabinet Reports since January 2023, the Panel

Decided: to agree

- (1) that the Head of Legal and Regulatory Services would reinforce existing guidance to report authors and request that they sought any additional support, if required, from the Service Lead – Risk and Safety; and
- (2) that the Head of Legal and Regulatory Services remind Elected Members that ongoing scrutiny of the Risk Implications section of Panel reports would support informed decision making.

The meeting ended at 11.00 a.m.