

Audit and Scrutiny Committee
24 August 2020

Virtual Meeting, 24 August 2020 - At a Special Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 10.00 a.m.

Present

Marie Burns, Joy Brahim, Alan Hill, Tom Marshall, Donald Reid and John Sweeney.

In Attendance

M. Boyd, Head of Finance and P. Doak, Senior Manager (Internal Audit, Risk and Fraud) (Finance and Corporate Support); J. Miller, Chief Planning Officer, Economic Development and Regeneration (Place); A. Fraser, Head of Democratic Services and H. Clancy and D. McCaw, Committee Services Officers (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Councillor Burns in the Chair.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 10 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 January 2020 were confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. Unaudited Annual Accounts 2019/2020

Submitted report by the Head of Finance on the unaudited Annual Accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 which were submitted to the Council's external auditors on 30 June 2020 and provide an overview of the financial performance of the various funds managed by the Council. The completion of the audit is anticipated by the end of September 2020.

In relation to the Health and Social Care Partnership, it was considered that the Committee should continue to receive regular updates on the financial position.

The Committee, in consideration of the unaudited Annual Accounts for 2019/20, agreed (a) to continue to receive regular reports on the financial position with regard to the Health and Social Care Partnership; and (b) to note (i) that the unaudited Annual Accounts were submitted to the Council's external auditors prior to the deadline on 30 June 2020; and (ii) that Deloitte LLP planned to complete their audit of Accounts by 30 September 2020 and would present their annual audit report to the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

4. Planning Services Update re former Seafield School, Eglinton Road, Ardrossan

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Place) providing an update on the position in relation to the former Seafield School, Eglinton Road, Ardrossan.

The requirements of the Notice under Section 179 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, issued on 24 September 2019, have not been met as the landowner has not carried out the required work despite Planning Services continuing to contact them and seek compliance with the Notice. The Planning Committee on 24 June 2020 agreed that the Council take direct action and seek to recover its costs from the landowner following any action.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to the following:-

- a landscaping contractor having been on site around 4 weeks ago carrying out some tidy up work;
- that the landowner had been in contact with the local press with regard to the site but no contact had been made with the Council;
- there has been no action taken regarding the boarding of the windows specified in the Notice, which still remain open;
- clarification on the recovery process in terms of any expenditure to the Council; and
- that Committee Members be kept advised of any progress.

The Committee agreed to note the terms of the Planning Services update to progress with direct action to implement the Notice.

5. Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2020

Submitted report by the Head of Finance on the findings of the recent national report “Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2020”, highlighting the key messages and providing an update of North Ayrshire Council’s position in relation to the key recommendations made by Audit Scotland. The supplement containing the key messages, recommendations and questions for Councillors was attached as Appendix 1 to the report which also provided a link to the full report.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to:-

- that the Appendix detailing Questions for Councillors is a best practice guide and consideration is required on how to take this forward through self-evaluation and identified themes;
- the effect and impact of Covid-19 in presenting unique challenges to all;
- that Members should consider any areas where further information/scrutiny could be sought;
- lessons learned on the response to the pandemic and progress in terms of a recovery strategy; and
- any potential focus for the Committee in terms of recovery arrangements.

The Committee agreed to note the findings and the position in North Ayrshire in relation to its recommendations as well as the improvement actions being addressed.

The meeting ended at 10.40 a.m.