

Audit and Scrutiny Committee
18 June 2019

IRVINE, 18 June 2019 - At a Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 10.00 a.m.

Present

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

In Attendance

C. Hatton, Chief Executive, L. Friel, Executive Director and P. Doak, Senior Manager (Internal Audit, Risk and Fraud) (Finance and Corporate Support); C. Whyte, Chief Finance and Transformation Officer (Health and Social Care Partnership); R. McCutcheon, Head of Service (Commercial) (Place); A. McClelland, Head of Service (Learning, Teaching and Curriculum) (Education and Youth Employment); C. Mcauley, Head of Service (Economic Growth) (Economy and Communities) and A. Fraser, Head of Democratic Services, N. Sugden, Policy and Performance Officer and A. Little, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Also In Attendance

Pat Kenny (Deloitte).

Chair

Councillor Burns in the Chair.

Apologies

Margaret George.

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 May 2019 were confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. External Audit Interim Report

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the findings from the External Audit Interim Report for 2018/19. Appendix 1 to the report detailed the audit findings and action plan from the report. A report on sector developments was attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

The Committee was provided with a revised page 21 of Appendix 1 to the report and advised that this would be uploaded to the Council's website.

The Committee agreed to note (i) the audit findings and action plan from the External Auditor's Interim report and (ii) the sector developments as outlined in the External Auditor's Sector Developments report.

4. Local Government in Scotland: Challenges and Performance 2019

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Support) on the findings of the recent Audit Scotland national report, Local Government in Scotland: Challenges and Performance 2019. A summary of the key messages and recommendations was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

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

- the Transformation Think Tank which has been established to develop a pipeline of initiatives to will help the council address its future funding challenge, share best practice and generate innovative ideas;
- work underway to streamline the governance for transformation projects across the Council ensuring that this is robust and accountable with regular reporting to the Chief Officer Leadership Team; and
- the roll out of "Consul" a new tool for community conversations and briefings for Members that can be provided by the Head of Service (Connected Communities).

Noted.

5. Performance End of Year 2018/19 Council Plan/Directorate Plan

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the end of year 2018/19 Council Plan/Directorate Plan Performance reports. Appendix 1 to the report provided a status summary from April 2018 to March 2019 for each of the 31 performance measures. The Council Plan Exception Report for those measures adrift of target were outlined at Appendix 2. The Directorate performance reports were attached at Appendices 3 – 8 of the report and provided more narrative about the 2018/19 performance of Directorates to deliver the strategic priorities of the Council Plan.

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

Democratic Services

- a report on Brexit that will be presented to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in September 2019;
- lessons learned from the European Elections;
- further details that will be provided to Members on the European electors issued with Poll Cards;
- 97.5% of invoices processed by Democratic Services and forwarded to Finance for payment that were paid within 30 days;

- ongoing work by Connected Communities that will assist in improving the percentage of respondents who agree that Locality Partnerships are helping to address local issues and local inequalities; and
- the low absence level within Democratic Service when compared to other services that can be partly attributed to the workforce being office-based and having facilities to work from home.

Finance and Corporate Support

- the migration of staff from Lotus Notes to O365 that will be completed in July 2019 and the phased migration of Elected Members to O365 that is underway;
- the Blue Wave of Change Leadership programme that challenges the current model of working, encourages collaborative working, a culture of innovation and creativity which in turn will support the Council's transformation agenda;
- the national Benefits system that is used across Scotland and work that will be undertaken to simplify the system for clients;
- issues with the Lagan system that will be investigated to ensure actions are not closed off until they have been completed; and
- continued work to encourage the take up of Ebilling.

Economy and Communities

- the range of supports provided to modern apprentices and the fact that approximately 70-80% move onto full time employment;
- the national trend of decreasing footfalls in town centres;
- further details of town centre footfalls and the location of the footfall trackers that will be provided to Members;
- the national tourism survey results which are compiled from returns completed by tourist operators;
- the COIG - progress with the route development and work on the marketing and app that is underway; and
- plans that are underway for the wind up of Better Off North Ayrshire in March 2020.

The Committee congratulated the Service for the success in securing the Ayrshire Growth Deal and additional funding for local communities.

Education and Youth Employment

- a range of supports for ASN pupils, including an Inclusion Group and a Strategy that is in place for schools;
- a review of the Quality Improvement Framework that is underway and will increase the focus on school empowerment; and
- an Early Years Update Report that will be presented to Committee in September.

Place

- unsightly gap sights that can be left following demolition of buildings;
- detailed plans and programmes that are in place for Council developments to minimise the length of time sites remain in an unsightly condition; and

- extensive consultation which takes place with the public and interested parties and which exceeds the recommended guidelines.

The Committee congratulated the Service for the prompt responses they provide to service requests.

Health and Social Care Partnership

- the repayment of £0.668m towards the £1.5m debit to the Council during 2018/19, with the remainder to be repaid in future years;
- continuing work to reduce the levels of delayed discharges; and
- a range of factors that can impact on the number of days people spend in hospital when they are ready to be discharged.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Executive Director (Economy and Communities) provide further details of town centre footfalls and the location of the footfall trackers to Members; (b) that the Head of Service (Learning, Teaching and Curriculum) provide an Early Years Update report to the Committee meeting in September 2019; and (c) to otherwise note the report.

The meeting ended at 12 noon