

Audit and Scrutiny Committee  
5 September 2023

At a Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 10.00 a.m. involving participation by remote electronic means.

**Present**

John Bell, Donald Reid, Eleanor Collier, Cameron Inglis, Tom Marshall, Davina McTiernan and John Sweeney.

**In Attendance**

C. Cameron, Director, P. Doak, Head of Service (Finance and Transformation) and E. Stewart, Senior Manager (Children, Families and Justice) (Health and Social Care Partnership); A. Sutton, Executive Director and C. Hope, Senior Manager (Facilities Management) (Communities & Education); M. Boyd, Head of Service, L. Miller, Senior Manager, K. Gray, Team Manager, M. McCall, R. Hodge, D. Perrit and G. McMaster, Fraud Investigators (Audit, Fraud, Safety and Risk) (Finance); D. Hammond, Head of Service (Sustainability, Transport & Corporate Property), Y. Baulk, Head of Service (Housing & Public Protection) and F. Ellis, Senior Manager (Housing Strategy & Development) (Place); and A. Craig, Head of Service (Democratic), C. Stewart and H. Clancy, Committee Services Officers (Chief Executive's Service).

**Chair**

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

**Apologies**

Matthew McLean and Ian Murdoch.

**1. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 11 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors

**2. Minutes**

The Minutes of (i) the Ordinary Meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee held on 30 May 2023; and (ii) the Special Meeting held on 27 June 2023 were confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

**3. Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator 2022/23**

Submitted report by the Executive Director (Place) on the Council's Annual Return of the Charter 2022/23 submission and requesting endorsement of the Annual Assurance Statement to be submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator. The Annual Assurance Statement was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

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

- agreed and documented timeframe for repairs, following inspection for condensation dampness and mould;
- the current position with regard to the review of the Housing Allocations Policy;
- the length of time taken for adaptations to be carried out and the reasons behind any delays;
- compulsory testing of gas and electrical safety testing (including smoke detection installations) including the position regarding access and forced entry procedures; and
- the position regarding the percentage of provision of hostel accommodation.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Committee Chair sign the Annual Assurance Statement detailed at Appendix 1 to the report; and (b) to note (i) the Annual Return on the Charter submission 2022/23; (ii) the supporting evidence provided to demonstrate compliance with the regulatory framework; (iii) the Council's non-compliance with its gas, electrical and fire safety legal responsibilities, albeit all outstanding gas safety checks for 2022/23 had now been carried out.

#### **4. North Ayrshire HSCP - Internal Control Review**

Submitted report by the Director, North Ayrshire HSCP on the recent work which had been undertaken to strengthen the internal control environment of the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Members asked questions and noted that further information in relation to the extent of spend would be provided on the most used Procurement Card, by volume of spend, including the possibility of obtaining itemised information on items of spend of £100 or more.

Noted.

#### **5. Accounts Commission's Report: Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2023**

Submitted a report by the Head of Service (Finance) on the findings of the Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022 report by the Accounts Commission highlighting key messages and recommendations.

A link to the full report was provided within the Executive Summary which examined how the Covid-19 pandemic had affected councils and their performance; considered the current and future challenges facing local government; and assessed how well-placed Councils are to deal with the current and future challenges.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information in relation to the anticipated timescales, including change of timelines, and the challenges of financial planning on initiatives and projects.

The Committee agreed to note (i) the findings of the Accounts Commission report; (ii) the key messages and recommendations contained in the report; and (iii) North Ayrshire Council's current approach in relation to each recommendation.

## **6. Internal Audit Reports Issued**

Submitted report by the Head of Service (Finance) on the findings of Internal Audit work completed between May and August 2023. The findings from five audit assignments were detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, together with the respective executive summaries and actions plans.

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

### Glow

- access permission rights to Glow accounts and its level of use;
- the position regarding mandatory training provided to Glow users which incorporated the types of data suitable to store and send via this system (action point b, due date: August 2023), and the assurance given that this had been actioned; and
- the position regarding a high number of users with administrator rights access, meaning that staff had full access to the system with an access level higher than their job role (action point d, due date: August 2023), and the assurance given that this had been actioned at both a national and local level.

### Payroll Transaction Testing

- the position regarding (action point a, due date: 31 July 2023) in which hours worked on one of the Building Service standby timesheets was higher than the times recorded on the job details form, and the assurance given that this action was now complete.

The Committee agreed to note the outcomes from the Internal Audit work completed as set out in the report and detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

## **7. Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud Action Plans: Quarter 1 Update**

Submitted report by the Head of Service (Finance) on the progress made by Council Services in implementing the agreed actions from Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud reports as at 30 June 2023. Appendix 1 to the report provided full details of the action which was not completed within the agreed timescales.

The Committee agreed to note (i) the current position with the implementation of Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud actions and (ii) the circumstances surrounding the one outstanding action not completed within the previously agreed timescale.

## **8. Exclusion of the Public – Para 1**

The Committee resolved in terms of Section 50(A)4 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the Meeting the press and the public for the following items of business on the grounds indicated in terms of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

## **9. Investigation Reports Issued**

Submitted report by the Head of Service (Finance) on investigation reports finalised since the last meeting.

Following questions and discussion, the Committee agreed to note the outcomes from the investigations carried out.

The meeting ended at 11.45 a.m.