

Audit and Scrutiny Committee
19 January 2022

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

Marie Burns, Alan Hill, Davina McTiernan, Donald Reid and John Sweeney.

In Attendance

C. Hatton, Chief Executive; C. Cameron, Director and P. Doak, Head of Service (Finance and Transformation)(Health and Social Care Partnership); A. McClelland, Head of Service (Education) and L. Taylor, Senior Manager (Communities); Y Baulk, Head of Service (Physical Environment), C. McAuley, Head of Service (Economic Development and Regeneration) and D. Hammond, Head of Service (Commercial)(Place); M. Boyd, Head of Service (Finance) and L. Miller, Senior Manager (Audit, Fraud, Safety and Insurance), A. Craig, Head of Service (Democratic), I. Hardy, Corporate Policy and Performance Officer, A. Little and H. Clancy, Committee Services Officers (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Councillor Burns in the Chair.

Apologies

Tom Marshall.

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 16 November 2021 were confirmed and the Minutes signed in accordance with Paragraph 7 (1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. Annual Performance Report 2020/21

Submitted report by the Head of Service (Democratic) on the Annual Performance Report (APR) during the 2020-21 financial year based on the detailed six-monthly Council Plan Progress Reports. The full APR was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. Appendix 2 detailed Performance Indicators from the Council Plan Performance Framework, showing (where available) targets and traffic light symbols to illustrate progress. Estimated statuses for the Council Plan overall actions based on the information available through Council Plan and Supporting North Ayrshire Together reports were provided at Appendix 3 to the report.

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

- An increase in the number of self-service transactions in 2020/21 and alternative methods that had been put in place to allow those without digital connectivity to contact the Council and access services;
- The flexible approach to service delivery that had included home working where possible;
- Physical face-to-face work within communities and with vulnerable groups as and when it had been required and had been safe to do so during the pandemic restrictions;
- £40m worth of financial support provided to businesses during a fast moving and changing environment and the fact it was too early to determine recovery levels within the local economy;
- Delivery of 3,194 pieces of IT equipment such as Chrome Books, iPads, Wi-Fi routers and SIMs provided to pupils to access online learning and the continued use of digital devices by pupils at home;
- The receipt of a further 1,000 devices that would be provided to those who needed it most within the P5 and S2 year groups;
- Planned work to refresh the Wi-Fi infrastructure in schools that would allow these devices to be used in school and at home; and
- A report that would be provided to the next meeting as part of the ongoing Audit work on Procurement Activity with local businesses on the current position and progress of the various different procurement exercises.

The Committee acknowledged the hard work and commitment of staff in ensuring continued service delivery throughout the pandemic.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the information contained within the report; and (b) to otherwise note that the Head of Service (Finance) is to provide a report on Procurement Activity with local business to the Audit and Scrutiny meeting on 8 March 2022 as part of the ongoing internal audit work.

4. Code of Corporate Governance Statement 2021/22

Submitted report by the Head of Service (Democratic) on the Code of Corporate Governance Statement 2021/22, which outlined how the Council ensured good governance and transparent accountability. The Statement was set out in full at Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee agreed to approve the Code of Corporate Governance Statement 2021/22, as outlined at Appendix 1 to the report.

7. Internal Audit Reports Issued

Submitted report by the Head of Service (Finance) on the findings of Internal Audit work completed during September and October 2021. The findings from five audit assignments were detailed at Appendix 1 to the report, together with the respective executive summaries and action plans.

Members asked questions and were provided with further information on:-

- Payroll transaction testing that had identified overtime payments where the overtime had been approved by Managers but the reason for the overtime had not been recorded on the appropriate systems;
- A briefing note that would be circulated to the Committee with further information in respect of the Payroll transaction testing;
- Delays in submitting leaver information that had resulted in overpayment of salaries;
- A review of the Information Asset Register that had found not all services had recorded their CCTV systems in the Register;
- The establishment of a cross-service working group to take forward issues relating to CCTV across the Council, that would undertake an inventory of all CCTV assets in place to ensure that they were all recorded and that appropriate processes for regular updating and review were in place; and
- A progress report to a future meeting of the Committee, that would include information on capital replacement of CCTV systems.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Executive Director (Place) provide a report on the progress of the CCTV working group, including information on capital replacement of CCTV systems; (b) that the Head of Service (Finance) provide a briefing note to the Committee with further information in respect of the Payroll transaction testing; and (c) to note the outcomes from the Internal Audit work completed as set out in the report.

The meeting ended at 10.45 a.m.