

THE FIFE COUNCIL - STANDARDS, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE – BLENDED MEETING

Committee Room 2, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes.

13 February 2025

10.00 am – 11.20 am

PRESENT: Councillors Dave Dempsey (Convener), Tom Adams, David Alexander, Lesley Backhouse, John Beare, Aude Boubaker -Calder, Alycia Hayes, Gordon Pryde and Ann Verner.

ATTENDING: Eileen Rowand, Executive Director Finance and Corporate Services, Pamela Redpath, Service Manager - Audit and Risk Management Services, Shona Slayford, Audit Team Manager, Clare Whyte, Risk Management Team Leader, Jenna Hetherington, Risk Management Co-ordinator and Robert Norrie, Risk Management Co-ordinator, Audit and Risk Management Services; Sharon McKenzie, Head of Human Resources and Stevie Murray, Service Manager, Human Resources Service; John Mills, Head of Housing Services and Joy Fulton, Lead Officer - Private Housing – Housing Estates and Safer Communities, Housing Services; Pam Ewen, Head of Planning Service; Allan Barclay, Service Manager, Environment and Building Services; Shelagh McLean, Head of Education and Children's Services (Early Years and Directorate Support); Martin Kotlewski, Service Manager - Solutions and Service Assurance, BTS; Avril Sweeney, Manager (Compliance), Health and Social Care Partnership; Lindsay Thomson, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Helena Couperwhite, Service Manager - Committee Services and Wendy MacGregor, Committee Officer, Legal and Democratic Services.

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Al Clark.

130. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No. 22.

131. MINUTE

The committee considered the minute of the meeting of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee of 25 November 2024.

Decision

The committee approved the minute.

132. ISSUED AUDIT REPORTS

The committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services summarising findings from the Internal Audit Reports that had been finalised since the last meeting of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee. Highlighted in the reports were any areas of concern and, if applicable, instances where Services were not taking appropriate action.

Decision

The committee noted the contents of the report and the summary of findings detailed at Appendix 1 – Summary of Audit Reports Issued.

133. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services providing an update on the progress towards delivering the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Internal Audit Plans.

Decision

The committee noted:-

- (1) the update on progress towards delivering the 2023/24 and 2024/25 Internal Audit Plans detailed at Appendix A - 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan – Progress Report and Appendix B - 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan – Progress Report;
- (2) an update from the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services, highlighting reasons for the delay in delivering the Internal Audit Plans 2023/24 and 2024/25 and advising of steps taken which would improve delivery: and
- (3) the movement in status for each assignment since the last progress report presented to the Committee on 23 May 2024.

134. RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services providing an update on the Strategic Risk Register and the level of residual risk the Council was exposed to as of 22 January 2025.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the level of residual risk that the Council was exposed to as of 22 January 2025;
- (2) noted an update to the agenda pack at page number 24, at the column headed 22 January 2025 – the Likelihood verses impact scores had been amended at Strategic Risk Codes FC017, FC001 and FC016;
- (3) approved the Council's Strategic Risk Register detailed at Appendix A to the report; and
- (4) noted that further updates on Risk Management arrangements would be provided in line with the approved Policy and Strategy document.

Councillor David Alexander joined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

135. STANDARDS UPDATE – ANNUAL REPORTS, HEARING OUTCOMES AND CONSULTATIONS

The committee considered a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services advising that the Ethical Standards Commissioner for Scotland and the Standards Commission for Scotland had both published their annual reports for 2023/24 and reported on the findings of the annual reports relating to code of conduct investigations and hearings.

Decision

The committee noted:-

- (1) the Ethical Standards Commissioner for Scotland Annual Report for 2023/24, summarised in section 1 of the report;
- (2) the Standards Commission for Scotland Annual Report 2023/24 summarised in section 1 of the report);
- (3) that decisions of the Hearing Panel of the Standards Commission for Scotland (including the decisions to “do neither”) would continue to be monitored, and that appropriate reports and/or advice would be given to the Council if required (detailed in section 2 of the report);
- (4) that there had been one case, involving multiple respondents from Fife Council, where the Standards Commission had agreed with the Ethical Standards Commissioner that it was not proportionate to undertake a hearing and no further action would be required; and
- (5) that there had been one hearing which related to a former Fife Council Councillor in 2023/24, the outcome of which had been reported to full Council in September 2023 and to this Committee in January 2024.

136. STANDARDS, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE WORK PLAN

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services outlining the workplan for future meetings of the committee.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) reviewed the content of the work plan, agreed it would be updated as required;
- (2) noted an update from the Convener on the unallocated section of the work plan, that the review of the overall Complaints Process, requested by the Cowdenbeath Area Committee, would be included in the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26 and would be removed from the work plan. The members of the Cowdenbeath Area Committee would be advised of the update.