

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

**Committee Room 2, Floor 5, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes**

**18 January 2024**

**10.00 am – 12.00 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillors Dave Dempsey (Convener), Tom Adams, Lesley Backhouse, John Beare, Al Clark, Gary Holt, Sarah Neal, Gordon Pryde and Ross Vettraino (substituting for Ann Verner).

**ATTENDING:** Eileen Rowand, Executive Director Finance and Corporate Services, Elaine Muir, Head of Finance, Pamela Redpath, Service Manager - Audit and Risk Management Services, Carolyn Ward, Audit Team Leader, Clare Whyte, Risk Management Team Leader, Robert Norrie, Risk Management Co-ordinator, Jacqueline Armitage, Service Manager - Transactions Team; Pam Ewen, Head of Planning; Shelagh McLean, Head of Education and Childrens Services (Early Years and Directorate Support), Mark Smith, Service Manager, Education Children's and Families Service Manager- Fife Wide, Zoe Thomson, Quality Improvement Officer – Equity, Education and Children's Services; Martin Kotlewski, Service Manager – BTS Solutions and Service Assurance, Andy Milne, Service Manager – BTS Technical and Hosting Core; Paul Vaughan, Head of Communities and Neighbourhoods Service, Craig Waddell, Service Manager - Corporate Development, Communities and Neighbourhoods Service; Lynne Johnston, Business Change Manager, Housing Operations and Regeneration; Barbara Cooper, Human Resources Service Manager, Health Safety and Wellbeing and Steven Michie, Lead Officer – Health and Safety and Wellbeing; Lindsay Thomson, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Helena Couperwhite, Manager - Committee Services and Wendy MacGregor, Committee Officer, Legal and Democratic Services.

**ALSO ATTENDING:** Amy Hughes, Assistant Manger Public Sector External Audit and Karen Jones, Director of Audit and Assurance, Azets Audit Services.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors Graeme Downie and Ann Verner.

**72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**73. MINUTE**

The committee considered the minute of the meeting of the Standards, Audit and Risk committee on 9 November 2023.

Arising from the minute, with reference to paragraph 70(2), the committee noted that a workshop was to be arranged in early March 2024 to facilitate discussion on Common Good assets, governance and management arrangements. An invitation to attend the workshop would be issued to members of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee and members of the seven Area Committees.

**Decision**

The committee agreed to approve the minute.

**74. 2023/24 ISSUED AUDIT REPORTS**

The committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services summarising findings from the Internal Audit Reports finalised since the meeting of the committee on 9 November 2023. Areas of concern were highlighted and, if applicable, instances where Services were not taking appropriate action.

**Decision**

The committee noted the contents of the report, including the summary of findings detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

**75. 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 review process and the new Strategic Risk Register, including the level of residual risk the Council was exposed to as at 17 November 2023.

**Decision**

The committee:-

- (1) noted the key stages of the comprehensive Strategic Risk Register review process as well as their collaborative nature and timeous completion;
- (2) noted the level of residual risk that the Council was exposed to as at 17 November 2023;
- (3) agreed to approve the Council's new Strategic Risk Register detailed in Appendix A to the report;
- (4) thanked officers across the Council and members of the Audit and Risk Management Team involved in the substantial work in relation to the preparation of the finalised Strategic Risk Register; and
- (5) noted that further updates on Risk Management arrangements would be provided in line with the approved Policy and Strategy document.

*Councillor Vettraino left the meeting during consideration of the above item.*

*The Committee adjourned at 11.35 am and reconvened at 11.40 am*

**76. 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 published their annual reports for 2022/23: to report on the findings of the Hearing Panel of the Standards Commission for Scotland during the period and advising on the current consultations.

**Decision**

The committee:-

- (1) noted the Ethical Standards Commissioner for Scotland Annual Report for 2022/23, detailed in section 1 of the report;
- (2) noted the Standards Commission for Scotland Annual Report 2022/23, detailed in section 1 of the report;
- (3) noted the decisions of the Hearing Panel of the Standards Commission for Scotland, which would continue to be monitored and appropriate reports and/or advice given to the Council if required, detailed in section 2 of the report;
- (4) noted that there had been one hearing related to a Fife Council Councillor in 2022/23, the outcome of which was reported to full Council in September 2023;
- (5) noted that the Monitoring Officer would continue to offer comment on the draft revised guidance on the Councillors' Code of Conduct through the SOLAR working group; and
- (6) agreed to delegate any Fife Council response to the following consultations, detailed in section 3 of the report, to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Convener and Depute Convener of the Standards, Audit and Risk Committee and the Spokesperson for Finance, Economy and Strategic Planning
  - (a) a Standards Commission for Scotland draft strategic plan for 2024-2028 (comments due by the end of January 2024); and
  - (b) the Ethical Standards Commissioner's draft strategic plan 2024-2028 (comments due by the end of January 2024).

**77. FIFE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD (IJB) 2022/23 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The committee considered a report by the Service Manager, Audit and Risk Management Services presenting an internal audit report from the Fife Integration Joint Board's 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan on Clinical and Care Governance.

**Decision**

The committee noted:-

- (1) for assurance purposes, the information contained in the Clinical and Care Governance internal audit report detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (2) members' concerns that the information contained in the Internal Audit report did not meet accessibility requirements. The committee also suggested an explanation of the acronyms used throughout the document for future reports and requested their comments be raised with the Fife Integration Joint Board for consideration.

**78. STANDARDS, AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director, Finance and Risk Management Services presenting the workplan for future meetings of the committee.

**Decision**

The committee noted that members would come forward with suggestions for specific areas they would like to see covered in any of the reports.