

MEETING: 6 FEBRUARY 2020

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the 464th meeting of the Accounts Commission held in the offices of Audit Scotland at 102 West Port, Edinburgh, on Thursday 9 January 2020, at 10.15am.

PRESENT: Graham Sharp (Chair)
Andrew Burns
Andrew Cowie
Sophie Flemig
Sheila Gunn
Christine Lester
Sharon O'Connor
Pauline Weetman
Geraldine Wooley

IN ATTENDANCE: Paul Reilly, Secretary to the Commission
Fraser McKinlay, Controller of Audit and Director of Performance Audit and Best Value (PABV)
John Boyd, Senior Manager, Grant Thornton (Item 8)
Joanne Brown, Partner, Grant Thornton (Item 8)
Aileen Campbell, Auditor, Performance Audit and Best Value (Item 8)
John Cornett, Audit Director, Audit Services (Item 9)
Blyth Deans, Audit Manager, Performance Audit and Best Value (Item 8)
Stephen O'Hagan, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Services (Item 9)

Item Subject

1. Apologies for absence
2. Declarations of interest
3. Decisions on taking business in private
4. Minutes of meeting of 12 December 2019
5. Update report by the Secretary to the Commission
6. Update report by the Controller of Audit
7. Improvement Service: Strategy and activities
8. Best Value Assurance Report: The Highland Council
9. Statutory report: Glasgow City Council
10. Best Value Assurance Report: The Highland Council (in private)
11. Statutory report: Glasgow City Council (in private)
12. Commission business matters (in private)

1. Apologies for absence

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Tim McKay, Stephen Moore and Elma Murray.

2. Declarations of interest

The following declaration of interest was made:

- Andy Cowie in item 8 as he is resident in the Highland Council area and in a former role as a chief police officer he worked in partnership with Highland Council, and in item 9 as he is a former resident in the Glasgow City Council area.

3. Decisions on taking business in private

It was agreed that items 10 to 12 be considered in private because:

- Item 10 requires the Commission to consider actions in relation to a report by the Controller of Audit.
- Item 11 requires the Commission to consider actions in relation to a report by the Controller of Audit.
- Item 12 may be required if there are any confidential matters that require to be discussed outwith the public domain. The Chair will inform the meeting in public at the start of the meeting if this item is required and what it covers.

No business was notified by members for item 12 and thus the Chair advised that the item would not require discussion.

4. Minutes of meeting of 12 December 2019

The minutes of the meeting of 12 December 2019 were approved as a correct record.

5. Update report by the Secretary to the Commission

The Commission considered a report by the Secretary providing an update on significant recent activity relating to local government and issues of relevance or interest across the wider public sector.

During discussion, the Commission agreed:

- In relation to paragraph 6, to write to the Scottish Government to note the Commission's confidence in the evidence reported in the Local Government Overview Report in relation to local government budgets.

Action: Secretary

- In relation to paragraph 8, to note that the Commission will note its interest with the Local Government and Communities Committee in its call for views on how to achieve community wellbeing, with a view to participating at a later stage of the Committee's work.

Action: Secretary

- In relation to paragraph 11, to note that the Secretary will report back on the implications for the Commission on the Financial Reporting Council's revised Ethical Standard.

Action: Secretary

- In relation to paragraph 16, to note that the Secretary will consult with Audit Scotland colleagues on whether to respond to the Scottish Government

consultation on the draft vision and principles for *Housing to 2040*.

Action: Secretary

- In relation to paragraph 18 and a query in this regard from Geraldine Wooley, agreed that the Director of PABV discuss with the teams overseeing work on the National Fraud Initiative and Housing Benefit Performance Audit the potential for reporting on recent increased benefit uptake, including matters relating to the impact of the Money Talk Team service provided by Citizens Advice.

Action: Director of PABV

- In relation to paragraph 25 and a query in this regard from Sheila Gunn, that more information be provided on the support provided by the Scottish Government to Highland Council in relation to housing shortages.

Action: Secretary and Director of PABV

- In relation to paragraph 26, to note that the Secretary would report further on the implications for the Commission's work of the Scottish Elections Reform Bill.

Action: Secretary

- In relation to paragraph 43, to note that the Secretary will consult with Audit Scotland colleagues on whether the Commission should respond to the call for views of the Health and Sport Committee in its inquiry into social care.

Action: Secretary

Following discussion, the Commission agreed to note the report.

6. Update report by the Controller of Audit

The Commission noted a verbal update from the Controller of Audit on his recent activity.

Arising therefrom, the Commission noted advice from the Controller that he would be reporting to the Commission at a future meeting on matters arising from the audit of Fife Integration Joint Board.

7. Improvement Service: Strategy and activities

The Commission considered a report from the Secretary introducing a presentation from Sarah Gadsden, Interim Chief Executive of the Improvement Service.

During discussion, the Commission:

- Noted its desire for further discussion with the Interim Chief Executive on matters of mutual interest, particularly around its forthcoming business plan.
- Noted advice from the Interim Chief Executive on the outcome of the strategic review of the Improvement Service conducted by its Board in conjunction with COSLA.
- Noted advice from the Interim Chief Executive, arising from a query from Christine Lester, on ongoing and proposed activities in relation to health and social care integration.
- Agreed to further consider the potential for a joint statement from the Commission and the Improvement Service in relation to their respective roles in improvement.

Action: Secretary

8. Best Value Assurance Report: The Highland Council

The Commission considered a report by the Secretary to the Commission presenting the Controller of Audit's Best Value Assurance Report for The Highland Council.

Following questions to the Controller of Audit, the Commission agreed to consider in private how to proceed.

9. Statutory Report: Glasgow City Council

The Commission considered a report by the Secretary presenting the Controller of Audit's statutory report on a matter arising from the 2018/19 audit of Glasgow City Council.

Following questions to the Controller of Audit, the Commission agreed to consider in private how to proceed.

10. Best Value Assurance Report: The Highland Council (in private)

The Commission discussed how to proceed in relation to the Controller of Audit's Best Value Assurance Report for The Highland Council.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed to make findings to be published on 23 January 2020.

11. Statutory Report: Glasgow City Council (in private)

The Commission discussed how to proceed in relation to the Controller of Audit's Statutory Report on a matter arising from the 2018/19 audit of Glasgow City Council.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed to make findings to be published on 6 February 2020.

12. Commission business matters

The Chair, having advised that there was no business for this item, closed the meeting.