

MEETING: 15 APRIL 2021

REPORT BY: INTERIM CHAIR OF ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

INTERIM CHAIR'S UPDATE REPORT

Purpose

1. This report provides an update on the engagements and work of the Interim Chair of the Accounts Commission.

Engagement and Audit Scotland business

2. The engagements and work in the period from 1 to 31 March have been as follows:

Audit Scotland Board and Committee meetings

- 3 March – Audit Committee and Remuneration and Human Resources Committee (RemCo) meetings. The main items discussed were:
 - RemCo – 2021 Reward strategy report; the Diversity and Equality inclusion update report; and the People Strategy and Workforce Plan.
 - Audit Committee – Audit delivery 2019/20; Audit quality update; Q3 Financial performance report; a number of Internal and External Audit reports; review of Risk Management Framework; review of risk register; Annual review of business continuity arrangements 2021 and Governance updates.
- 10 March – Audit Scotland Board development discussion with Judith Strange, external consultant, in advance of workshops scheduled for 31 March and 10 May.
- 24 March – Audit Scotland Board Meeting. The main items of substance discussed were the outcome from the Review of Governance arrangements; Strategic Improvement Programme update; Business planning, performance and governance; an update on the New Audit Appointments project; 2020/21 Annual report; Proposed equalities outcomes 2021-2025 and 2020 Stakeholder engagement report. Copies of the key papers have been loaded onto the Commission's SharePoint site and brought to members attention.
- 31 March – Audit Scotland Board development workshop.

Audit Scotland engagement

- 3/8 March – Shortlisting and interviews for Interim Controller of Audit.
- 4 March – Monthly catch up with Diane McGiffen, Chief Operating Officer.
- 4 March – Catch up with David Blattman, HR & OD Manager.
- 15 March – Catch up with Fraser McKinlay, outgoing Controller of Audit and Director of Performance and Best Value, to discuss his thoughts on the role of the Controller of Audit.
- 17 March – Catch up with Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland and Accountable Officer, Audit Scotland.

- 17 March – New Audit Appointments Steering Group meeting.
- Feedback discussions with Audit Scotland colleagues on Interim Controller of Audit interviews.

External engagement

- 2 March – Strategic Scrutiny Group pre meeting with Fiona Duncan, Chair of The Promise Oversight Board, and Mark Roberts, Audit Director and Strategic Scrutiny Group Secretary.
- 9 March – Strategic Scrutiny Group Meeting – update will be shared with members at the May Commission meeting.
- 17/18 March – Accounts Commission Roundtables. Update email from Lucy Carter, Policy Manager, shared with members on 23 March 2021.
- 23 March – Observation of Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations board meeting with Tim McKay, Interim Deputy Chair. This was an action to support our development.
- 24 March – Introductory meeting with David Robb, new Interim Director for Local Government & Communities at Scottish Government.
- 31 March – Catch up with Brenda Campbell, Deputy Director for Local Government at Scottish Government, to provide an update on the Commission work programme and strategy and discuss ongoing changes in the Civil Service.

Commission business, development and support

3. Commission business has been as follows:

- Weekly catch ups with Paul Reilly, Secretary to the Commission, and Jillian Elgin, Executive Assistant.
- 2 March – Preparatory meeting for March Commission meeting with Paul Reilly and Tim McKay.
- 10 March – Accounts Commission pre meeting with Commission members.
- 10 March – Monthly sponsor catch up with Tim McKay and Local Government Overview team to discuss the approach, timing, and emerging messages for the Local Government Overview due for publication in May.
- 10 March – Strategic Improvement Programme catch up with Fraser McKinlay, Martin Walker, Associate Director, Corporate Performance and Risk, and Paul Reilly, Commission Secretary.
- 11 March – Accounts Commission meeting.
- 11 March – Commission Insight session.
- 15 March – Catch up with Tracey Bray, Senior Business Partner, HR & OD.
- 16 March – Catch up with Tim McKay.
- 18 March – Forward Planning meeting with Tim McKay, Paul Reilly, Lucy Carter and Jillian Elgin, Commission Support Team.
- 18 March – Preparatory meeting for Education outcomes media with Patrick McFall, Communications Adviser.
- 22 March – Education outcomes media with Patrick McFall.

- 30 March – Best Value Working Group meeting. Updates are shared with Commission members at each monthly Commission meeting as a standing item on our agenda.
- 31 March – Strategic Scrutiny Group follow-up meeting with Gemma Diamond, Mark Roberts, Strategic Scrutiny Group Secretaries, and Mark McCabe, Audit Manager.
- 31 March – Communications monthly catch up meeting with Paul Reilly, Lucy Carter, Craig Flannigan and Joanna Mansell, Communications Team, to discuss Accounts Commission communications, engagement and public profile.
- 31 March – Monthly sponsor catch up and draft report discussion with Tim McKay and Local Government Overview team to discuss the approach, timing, and emerging messages for the Local Government Overview due for publication in May.
- 31 March – Preparatory meeting with Carol Calder, Senior Audit Manager, to discuss Regional Networks of Registered Tenant Organisations and their enquires.

4. Other areas of work have included:

- Working on the recruitment for the Interim Controller of Audit appointment.
- Research and preparation for media and promotion for Education outcomes report.
- Preparation for the Audit Scotland Board development workshop.

Forthcoming activities

5. My forthcoming engagement activities include:

- Weekly catch ups with Paul Reilly and Jillian Elgin.
- 1 April – Strategic Scrutiny catch up with Brian McNulty, Chair of Strategic Operational Group, and Mark Roberts, Strategic Scrutiny Group Secretary.
- 1 April – Action Tracker review meeting with Paul Reilly, Jillian Elgin and Lucy Carter.
- 1 April – Digital Strategy catch up with David Robertson, Digital Services Manager, in preparation for his update to the Commission in May.
- 5 – 9 April – Annual leave.
- 12 April – Regular catch up with Alan Alexander, Audit Scotland Board Chair.
- 13 April – Antony Clark, new Interim Controller of Audit.
- 14 April – Accounts Commission pre meeting.
- 14 April – Best Value Working Group.
- 14 April – Forward Planning meeting.
- 14 April – Catch up with Caroline Gardner.

Conclusion

6. The Commission is invited to:

- a) note this report and enquire about any areas of interest

- b) consider whether there are any changes that they would wish to see to the format and content of the report for the future.

Elma Murray
Interim Chair
5 April 2021