

**MEETING: 9 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**REPORT BY: INTERIM CHAIR OF ACCOUNTS COMMISSION**

**INTERIM CHAIR'S UPDATE REPORT**

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### **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. August is a light month for Audit Scotland business, but the Audit Committee chair took the opportunity to have a Special Workshop to look at the Risk Register in detail and to spend some time scanning the risk horizon. This was an excellent opportunity to look wider than the Covid-19 risks and to explore the Board's overall approach to risk.

#### ***Audit Scotland engagement***

- 2 August – Catch-up with Kathrine Sibbald, New Audit Appointments (NAA) Project Manager, on New Audit Appointments.
- 3 August – Observed the Audit Scotland Management Team as part of my induction to the Audit Scotland Board. I found this to be an extremely useful opportunity and I have suggested to the Management Team that we jointly give some thought to how this could work on a more regular basis.
- 4 August – Auditing the here and now: The legacy of our work on devolution and Brexit Knowledge Café organised by Audit Scotland colleagues.
- 4 August – Monthly catch up with Stephen Boyle, Auditor General for Scotland. These meetings focus on joint areas of interest and how we can work well together.
- 4 August – Monthly catch up with Diane McGiffen, Chief Operating Officer. These meetings tend to focus on operational matters.
- 5 August – Preparatory meeting for Keynote Speaker Event (details below) on 19 August with Professor James Mitchell, University of Edinburgh, facilitating the event, Stephen Boyle, Kirsty Gibbons, Joanna Mansell and Patrick McFall, Communication Advisers.
- 10 August – Attended the Performance Audit and Best Value (PABV) Strategic Managers Meeting to talk with the Performance Audit and Best Value Senior managers and Audit Directors who liaise with the parliamentary clerks about the Commission's ambitions and desired impact for parliamentary engagement.
- 10 August – New Audit Appointment Steering Group Meeting.
- 17 August – Monthly catch up with Antony Clark, Interim Controller of Audit and Director of Performance and Best Value, to discuss key areas of work and intelligence.

- 19 August – Audit Scotland 2021: Shaping our future programme. The Keynote events are an opportunity for members of Audit Scotland's Management Team, Board, and the Accounts Commission to engage directly with Audit Scotland colleagues on key issues and how the organisation develops. The subject matter covered was the role of audit in tackling inequalities and we received a number of excellent questions from Audit Scotland staff.
- 23 August – Catch up with Antony Clark on our approach to Parliamentary Engagement.
- 24 August – Strategic Scrutiny Group Meeting. We heard from Adam Lang from Nesta, where he presented on Innovation and Risk. Adam has also agreed to meet with the Commission to explore this further. A more detailed update will be provided to members at the September Accounts Commission meeting.
- 26 August – Joint Work Programme Update and Review with Stephen Boyle, Tim McKay, Interim Deputy Chair, Antony Clark, Paul Reilly, Commission Secretary, Mark Roberts and Gemma Diamond, Audit Directors, Performance Audit and Best Value and Michelle Borland, Business Manager, Performance Audit and Best Value.

### ***External engagement***

- 10 August – Scottish Human Rights Committee (SHRC) Roundtable pre meeting to prepare for the meeting on the 26 August with Judith Robertson, Kavita Chetty and Luis Felipe Yanes of the SHRC and Carol Calder, Audit Director.
- 18 August – Aberdeen City Council pre-meeting with Andrew Burns and Sharon O'Connor, Commission Members, Paul Reilly and Martin McLaughlin, Audit Manager, to prepare for the Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) meeting with the Council later in the day.
- 18 August – Meeting with Aberdeen City Council to discuss Best Value report with Sharon O'Connor and Andrew Burns.
- 19 August – Introductory meeting with Ben Macpherson MSP, Minister for Social Security and Local Government. This was an excellent meeting and the Minister is very keen to look at new ways of engaging with and working with the Commission.
- 19 August – Introductory meeting with Kenneth Gibson MSP, new Convener of the Finance and Public Administration Committee. The discussion with the Convener was very wide ranging and we touched on a number of different areas of joint interest. He also offered the opportunity for me to contact him on an ongoing basis to keep him apprised of the Commission's work. You can see my follow-up letter to him on the Commission's SharePoint site.
- 26 August – SHRC Expert Roundtable Discussion: Human Rights and the role Regulators, Inspectorates and Ombudsman with Carol Calder and members of the Strategic Scrutiny Group.
- 31 August – Evidence session at the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee on the overview reports.

### **Commission business, development and support**

3. Commission business has been as follows:

- Regular catch ups with Paul Reilly and Jillian Elgin, Executive Assistant to the Commission.
- 2 August – Catch up with Tim McKay to discuss ongoing Commission business and how we are working.
- 4 August – Preparatory meeting for August Commission meeting Antony Clark, Paul Reilly, Tim McKay and Jillian Elgin.
- 4 August – Catch up with Christine Lester, Performance Audit Committee Chair.
- 5 & 31 August – Forward Planning meetings with Tim McKay, Paul Reilly, Lucy Carter, Policy Manager for the Commission, and Jillian Elgin to plan up and coming Commission business.
- 9 August – Strategy Seminar catch up meeting with Andrea Quinn, external facilitator, to prepare for the Commission's Strategy Seminar on the 11 August.
- 10 August – Strategic Scrutiny Group pre-meeting with Carol Calder.
- 11 August – Account Commission pre-meeting.
- 11 August – Accounts Commission Mid-Year Strategy Seminar.
- 12 August – Accounts Commission meetings.
- 12 August – Commission insight session with Jimmy Paul, Wellbeing Economy Alliance.
- 17 August – Aberdeen City pre-meeting with Commission members, Sharon O'Connor and Andrew Burns, in advance of formal meeting on 18 August.
- 19 August – Best Value Working Group meeting. Updates are shared with Commission members at each monthly Commission meeting as a standing item on our agenda.
- 24 August – Meeting with Antony Clark, Carol Calder, Brian Howarth, Blyth Deans and Joanna Mansell, all from Audit Scotland, to prepare for the session at the Local Government Housing and Planning Committee on the 31 August.
- 26 August – Attended Financial Audit and Assurance Committee and Performance Audit Committee.

4. Other areas of work have included:

- I attended the Deputy First Minister's Covid Recovery Roundtable on Sustainable Employment on the 5 August. The slides were shared with members on 11 August and uploaded to members SharePoint Site.
- Undertaking preparation for the evidence session at the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee on the overview reports.
- Signing off a detailed response for the Review into the effectiveness of the Public Sector Equality Duty in Scotland (Stage 2).
- Signing off a response to Professor Ken Muir on his Review following the publication of the OECD Report of Curriculum for Excellence.

- I was invited to attend the Enable Scotland Board meeting to discuss how I go about my work and connect all of the different strands.

### **Forthcoming activities**

5. My forthcoming engagement activities include:

- 1 September – Preparatory meeting for September Commission meeting Antony Clark, Paul Reilly, Tim McKay and Jillian Elgin.
- 1 September – Audit Scotland Audit Committee.
- 8 September – Accounts Commission pre-meeting.
- 9 September – Accounts Commission meeting.
- 14 September – Strategic Scrutiny Group and Strategic Operational Group catch up with Brian McNulty, Chair, and Carol Calder.

### **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**  
**31 August 2021**