

MEETING: 7 OCTOBER 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 of 1 to 30 September have been as follows:

Audit Scotland Board and Committee meetings

- 1 September – Audit Committee – The main matters discussed were Organisational response to Covid-19; Audit Quality update, Q1 Financial performance report; Review of risk register; Internal audit reports; Digital security update and governance reports.
- 22 September – Audit Scotland Board meeting - The main items of substance covered were our Governance arrangements; Strategic improvement programme update; Q1 Financial performance report and Q1 Corporate performance report; Annual policy reviews of records management, freedom of information and environmental information requests and security management; proposed Board and Committee meeting dates for 2022. Copies of the key papers have been loaded onto the Commission's SharePoint site and brought to members attention.
- 22 September – feedback meeting with Colin Crosbie, Independent Audit Scotland Board member, following his attendance at the Commission meeting earlier in September
- 27 September – Board Development Workshop which considered our role in Strategy setting, how we continue to work towards world class public audit, and how we work as a team.

Audit Scotland engagement

- 13 September – Catch up with Mark Taylor, Audit Director, Audit Services to discuss an update on the Scottish Exchequer, engagement with the Finance Committee and the development of strong Commission engagement with the Parliament.
- 15 September - 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 including our joint Parliamentary engagement.
- 15 September – Monthly catch up with Diane McGiffen, Chief Operating Officer. These meetings tend to focus on operational matters and the support required for the Commission.

- 16 September – Catch up with Leigh Johnston, Senior Manager, Performance Audit and Best Value in advance of November Strategic Scrutiny Group meeting to discuss the Health and Social Care Strategic Intelligence Group.
- 22 September – 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.
- 29 September – Unlocking skills, achieving potential – Understanding the barriers to change in Scotland's justice system Knowledge Café organised by Audit Scotland colleagues.

External engagement

- 14 September – 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. This was my final meeting with Brenda who is leaving the Scottish Government in October and is being replaced by Ellen Leaver.
- 14 September – 'Christie Commission – 10 years on' interview for the Improvement Service's [Thought Leadership Series](#) with Lynn Sharp Communications Officer at the Improvement Service to offer my perspective on the impact of Christie as Chair of the Accounts Commission.
- 16 September – Catch up with Gerry Cornes, Chief Executive of East Dunbartonshire Council
- 23 September – Solace Scotland Springboard Event – to offer my perspective on my leadership journey both as a former Chief Executive and as Interim Chair of the Accounts Commission on how to build a successful career in local government (and beyond) and the qualities that make a great leader.
- 29 September – catch up with Sean Neill, Director of Local Government at Scottish Government to discuss how we engage with the Parliament and Minister and key policy areas emerging from the Scottish Government
- 29 September – Introductory meeting with Ellen Leaver who is the new Deputy Director for Local Government and taking over from Brenda Campbell.

Commission business, development and support

3. Commission business has been as follows:

- Regular catch ups with Paul Reilly, Secretary to the Commission, and Jillian Elgin, Executive Assistant to the Commission.
- 1 September – Preparatory meeting for September Commission meeting Antony Clark, Paul Reilly, Tim McKay, Interim Deputy Chair, and Jillian Elgin.
- 1 September – Strategy Seminar catch up meeting with Andrea Quinn, external facilitator, in advance of Commission meeting on 9 September.
- 8 September – Account Commission pre-meeting.
- 9 September – Accounts Commission meetings.

- 14 September – Strategic Scrutiny catch up with Brian McNulty and Tina Yule who has replaced Brian as Chair of the Strategic Operational Group, and Carol Calder, Strategic Scrutiny Group Secretary.
- 16 September – met with Geraldine Wooley, Commission member, and Mark Roberts, Audit Director, Martin McLaughlin, Senior Audit Manager, to discuss the briefing on Business Support and Economic Recovery.
- 22 September – Forward Planning meeting with Tim McKay, Paul Reilly, Lucy Carter, Policy Manager for the Commission, and Jillian Elgin to plan up and coming Commission business.
- 23 September – 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.
- 23 September – Monthly sponsor catch up and issues and investigations 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.
- 27 September – Preparatory meeting for October Commission meeting Antony Clark, Paul Reilly, Tim McKay and Jillian Elgin.
- 29 September – National Care Standards sub-group meeting with the following Commission members: Stephen Moore, Christine Lester, Andrew Burns and Audit Scotland colleagues Jillian Matthews, Audit Manager, Angela Canning, Audit Director and Mark MacPherson, Audit Director.
- 30 September – New Ways of Working with Ministers discussion with Tim McKay, Christine Lester Performance Audit Committee Chair and Paul Reilly.

4. Other areas of work have included:

- Signed off the Commission Strategy which was published on 23 September.
- Commented on and signed off East Dunbartonshire Findings.
- Wrote my Christie Commission Blog – due for publication on 4th October to align with Challenge Poverty week.
- Commented on and signed off responses to the following consultations:
 - Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee on Pre-budget Scrutiny 2022/23.
 - Minimum Income Guarantee
 - Public inquiry to investigate the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic in Scotland
 - Ethical Standards Commissioners Code of Practice for Public Appointments consultation.
- Attended the APSE 2021 Annual Conference in Birmingham to speak about the APSE Local by Default report, diversity and equalities and the Christie Commission.

- Attended the Education Reform Stakeholder Panel on 14th September and met with Professor Ken Burns who is leading the review on Education Reform on 23rd September.
- Visited Ayrshire DYW (Developing Young Workforce) on 28th September with Mr Hepburn MSP to see their progress in engaging employers and young people to create employment opportunities. And attended the Transforming Employment Support Leadership Group co-chaired by Ministers and Cosla.

Forthcoming activities

5. My forthcoming engagement activities include:

- 4 October – Monthly catch up with Diane McGiffen, Chief Operating Officer
- 5 October – Scottish Leaders Forum event with Deputy First Minister and Councillor Alison Evison, Cosla President.
- 6 October – Accounts Commission pre-meeting.
- 7 October – Accounts Commission meeting.
- 12 October – Best Value Working Group meeting
- 12 October – Monthly catch up with Antony Clark, Interim Controller of Audit
- 13 October - Quarterly catch up with Simon Ebbett, Communications Manager
- 13 October – Forward Planning meeting with Tim McKay, Paul Reilly, Lucy Carter and Jillian Elgin.

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
30 September 2021