

Purpose

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

Engagement and Audit Scotland business

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

Audit Scotland Board and Committee meetings

- 23 January – Audit Scotland Board development session.
- 24 January – Audit Scotland Board. The main items of substance covered were Health, Safety and Wellbeing; Strategic Improvement Programme; Audit quality arrangements; an update on audit delivery; 2022/23 Spring Budget Revision and 2023/24 Budget proposal and Scottish Commission for Public Audit (SCPA) report; Ethical Standards Policy; Estate Strategy; and an update on Public Audit in Scotland and the new Audit Scotland corporate plan.

Audit Scotland engagement

- 5 January – Monthly catch up with Vicki Bibby, Chief Operating Officer.
- 26 January – Catch up with Vicki Bibby.

External engagement

- 18 January – Introductory meeting with Miles Briggs MSP.
- 18 January – Meeting with Edward Mountain MSP, Convener of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

3. Commission business has been as follows:

- Regular catch ups with Commission Support Team: Blyth Deans, Senior Manager, PABV; Martin McLauchlan, Policy Manager; Jillian Elgin, Executive Assistant; Miranda Nicoll, Executive Assistant; Jack Nixon, Executive Assistant; and Joanna Mansell, Communications Adviser.
- 9, 16, 19 and 26 January – Introductory meeting and catch ups with Helena Gray, the new Controller of Audit.
- 9 January – Media preparation session for the Local government financial bulletin 2021/22 with Adam Bullough, Audit Manager, PABV; Blyth Deans; Christopher Lewis, Senior Auditor, PABV; and Joanna Mansell.

- 11 January – Discussion on the Partnership Working Framework with Vicki Bibby; Blyth Deans; Gayle Fitzpatrick, Corporate Governance Manager; Helena Gray; and Martin Walker, Director of Corporate Support.
- 12 January – Accounts Commission meeting.
- 18 January – Discussion on the forthcoming Covid-19 data output with: Ashleigh Madjitey, Audit Manager, PABV; Joanna Mansell; Patrick McFall, Communications Adviser; Richard Robinson, Senior Manager, PABV; Mark Taylor, Audit Director, PABV; and Graeme West, Senior Data Analyst.
- 18 January – Development discussion with Andrew Burns.
- 19 January – Audit Quality Framework refresh discussion with Elaine Boyd, Director, Audit Quality and Appointments (AQA); John Gilchrist, Manager, AQA; Helena Gray; Parminder Singh, Manager, AQA; and Owen Smith, Senior Manager, AQA.
- 23 and 26 January – Catch ups with Tim McKay, Interim Deputy Chair.
- 26 January – Pre meeting ahead of session with the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee.
- 26 January – Meeting with Ellen Leaver and Hannah Keates, Scottish Government, to discuss the scrutiny improvement process.
- 26 January – Local Government Overview (LGO) emerging messages discussion with Tim McKay; Carol Calder, Audit Director, PABV; Blyth Deans; Adam Bullough; Lucy Jones, Senior Auditor, PABV; Christopher Lewis; Martin Allan, Auditor, PABV; Fiona Caffyn, Auditor, PABV; Andrew Dixon, Audit Officer, PABV; Lisa McNeely, Trainee Auditor, PABV; Niamh Pritchard, Trainee Auditor, PABV; and Joanna Mansell.
- 31 January – Session with the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee with Andrew Burns, Carol Calder and Blyth Deans to give evidence on the new deal for local government.

4. Other areas of work have included:

- Reviewing materials for the ongoing review of the Partnership Working Framework.
- Reviewing materials for the ongoing review of Public Audit in Scotland.
- Media preparation for the Local government financial bulletin 2021/22 publication.
- Preparing for a meeting with the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee.
- Preparing for appraisal with Sean Neill, Director for Local Government and Communities.

Forthcoming activities

5. My forthcoming engagement activities include:

- 8 February – Development discussions with Tim McKay and Christine Lester.

- 9 February – Accounts Commission meeting.

Strategic Scrutiny Group update

6. Recent business of the Strategic Scrutiny Group includes:

- Meetings scheduled on 16 January and 16 February with volunteers from the Strategic Scrutiny Group (Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland, HMICS, HMIPS) to develop the terms of reference for the re-positioned strategic scrutiny group and the operational scrutiny group to take a collaborative approach to developing the roles, responsibilities, purpose, governance and accountability arrangements as well as capturing the interrelationship between the two groups.

Conclusion

7. The Commission is invited to:

- note this report and enquire about any areas of interest
- consider whether there are any changes that they would wish to see to the format and content of the report for the future.