

Minutes of Meeting of the
Accounts Commission held in the
offices of Audit Scotland, 110
George Street, Edinburgh on
Wednesday 14 December 2005
at 10.30am.

PRESENT: A MacNish (Chair)
J Baillie
O Clarke
A Faulds
K Geddes
I Low
P McKinlay
M Raj

IN ATTENDANCE: C Gardner, Deputy Auditor General and Controller of Audit
H Hall, Managing Director, Audit Services
D Pia, Director of Performance Audit (Local Government)
W F Magee, Secretary
J Gillies, Communications Manager
N Bamforth, Assistant Director Performance Audit (item 8)
M Walker, Best Value Audit Manager (item 8)
A Taylor, Portfolio Manager, Performance Audit (item 11)
D McGiffen, Director of Corporate Services (items 12 and 13)

<u>Item No</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1.	Apologies
2.	Minutes
3.	Chairman's Introduction
4.	COSLA
5.	Deputy Auditor General
6.	Managing Director of Audit Services
7.	Performance Audit Committee
8.	Best Value Audit of Glasgow City Council
9.	Best Value Audit of Stirling Council
10.	Best Value Audit of Dundee City Council
11.	Statutory Performance Indicators
12.	Race Equality Scheme and Diversity Update
13.	Communications Audit

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Alan Alexander, Jean Couper, and Alyson Leslie.

2. Minutes

The minutes of meetings of 9 and 16 November 2005 were submitted and approved.

3. Chairman's Introduction

The Chairman referred to a number of matters of current interest, including

- His recent presentation on the Best Value experience to date at a conference which was also addressed by the Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform
- Continuing consideration of issues relating to the co-ordination of inspection, audit and regulation in local government and the wider public sector.

4. COSLA

There was submitted and noted a note of meeting of 1 December 2005 attended by representatives of the Commission and of COSLA to discuss issues of common interest including –

- Best Value
- Modernised Audit
- Statutory Performance Indicators
- Forthcoming reports
- Fees
- Reserves.

5. Deputy Auditor General

Caroline Gardner advised the Commission of a number of recent developments including the reaction to the publication of the complete statutory performance indicators on Audit Scotland's website.

6. Managing Director of Audit Services

Hugh Hall advised the Commission of a number of recent events including his meeting with Directors of Finance in local government.

7. Performance Audit Committee

There were submitted the minutes of meeting of the Performance Audit Committee of 7 December 2005. In discussion Isabelle Low referred to some particular matters –

- The desire to achieve a balanced publication programme throughout the year
- The Committee's wish that key messages from study reports should be highlighted in a brief format
- The continuing need to involve study sponsors as work proceeds.

The Commission noted the minutes, subject to the addition of Alastair MacNish to the sederunt, and approved the recommendations contained therein.

8. Best Value Audit of Glasgow City Council

There was submitted a report by the Secretary introducing the Controller of Audit's report on the Best Value audit of Glasgow City Council. The Controller of Audit's report was made to the Commission under section 102(1)(c) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The Controller of Audit and members of the Best Value team answered questions from members. Reference was made to comments submitted before the meeting by Jean Couper. After discussion the Commission agreed to continue consideration of this item to a future meeting.

9. Best Value Audit of Stirling Council

There was submitted and noted a note of meeting with Stirling Council representatives held on 10 November 2005 as a follow-up to the publication of the Commission's findings on the report of the Best Value audit of that Council.

10. Best Value Audit of Dundee City Council

There was submitted a note of meeting with representatives of Dundee City Council held on 15 November 2005 to follow up the Commission's findings on the report of the Best Value audit of that Council. After discussion the Commission agreed to require a further report by the Controller of Audit on progress made by Dundee City Council on the matters referred to in the Best Value audit report and findings as at the end of December 2006.

11. Statutory Performance Indicators

There was submitted a report by the Director of Performance Audit (Local Government) referring to the Commission's decision in September 2005 to revise the arrangements for its publication of information on Statutory Performance Indicators. The report set out three options for the future publication arrangements. After discussion the Commission agreed that the SPI information should be included in the Overview Report on Local Authority Accounts, including some discussion of key points emerging from the indicators.

12. Race Equality Scheme and Diversity Update

There was submitted a report by the Director of Corporate Services referring to the Accounts Commission's Race Equality Scheme and outlining steps being taken in Audit Scotland to introduce the Diversity Excellence Model. The report recommended that a full review of the Accounts Commission's Race Equality Scheme should take place as part of the process of introducing this model which will provide a strategy and framework for implementing and measuring diversity. In the meantime the Commission's most relevant functions under the Race Equality Scheme had been reviewed and an update was proposed for publication on the Audit Scotland website. In discussion it was agreed that the reference in the update to an Equality Scheme should be replaced by a reference to a Diversity and Equality Plan. Thereafter the Commission approved the proposals contained in the report.

13. Communications Audit

There was submitted a report by the Communications Manager introducing the results of a limited sample communications audit of stakeholders and clients which had been carried out to help inform discussion of future communications strategies. A summary of the findings of the audit accompanied the report. In discussion of the report a number of points were made –

- It was noted that there are different perceptions of Audit Scotland, the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission but these are marginal
- The recommendations contained in the summary of the audit are worthy of consideration by Audit Scotland
- It is always important to emphasise the independence of the Commission in any communications strategy.

Thereafter the Commission noted the report.