

AGENDA ITEM 3

Minutes of the meeting of the Accounts Commission held in the offices of Audit Scotland, 110 George Street, Edinburgh, on Wednesday, 4 March 2009, at 10.30am

PRESENT: J Baillie (Chair)
M Ash
A Faulds
J King
I Low
I Robertson
D Sinclair

IN ATTENDANCE: C Gardner, Deputy Auditor General and Controller of Audit
D Pia, Director of Public Reporting (Local Government)
C Coull, Secretary
F McKinlay, Assistant Director (Best Value), Public Reporting (items 1-10)
S Diggle, Portfolio Manager (Best Value), Public Reporting (item 5)
L Bradley, Director, Audit Services (Local Government)
P Tait, Assistant Director, Audit Services (Local Government) (item 5)
E Barrowman, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Services (Local Government) (item 5)
T Yule, Improvement Advisor, Public Reporting (Local Government) (items 9 and 10)

<u>Item No</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1.	Apologies for Absence
2.	Declarations of Interest
3.	Minutes
4.	Chair's Introduction
5.	Dumfries and Galloway Council – Audit of Best Value and Community Planning
6.	Argyll and Bute Council - Best Value follow-up report
7.	Best Value audits progress update
8.	Update on Best Value 2 developments
9.	Independent Review of Policing in Scotland by HMCICS
10.	Best Value in Police – Consultation Process and Selection of Pilots
11.	Audit Scotland Financial and Performance Information
12.	Strategy Seminar

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Owen Clarke, Michael Docherty, Adrienne Kelbie and Bill McQueen.

2. Declarations of Interest

It was noted that no declarations of interest were made.

3. Minutes

The minutes of meeting of 12 February 2009 were submitted and approved.

4. Chair's Introduction

The Chair reported on a number of items as follows:

- Both he and the Controller of Audit had met with the Chief Executive and Chair of the Audit Commission to discuss matters of mutual interest
- The next meeting with scrutiny bodies would be held on 12 March
- Meetings had been arranged with SOLACE and CoSLA
- He was to give a briefing to the Public Audit Committee of Parliament on the local authority overview report
- He was to be speaking at a conference on scrutiny reform
- Advertisements for new members of the Commission and a new Deputy Chair would appear in the press on 27 and 29 March

The position was noted

5. Dumfries and Galloway Council – Audit of Best Value and Community Planning

There was submitted and noted a report by the Secretary introducing the Controller of Audit's report of the Best Value audit of Dumfries and Galloway Council. The report was made by the Controller of Audit under section 102 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The Controller of Audit and members of the Best Value Audit team answered questions by members of the Commission.

Thereafter the Commission agreed to make findings as contained in Appendix 1 to these minutes.

6. Argyll and Bute Council – Best Value follow-up report

With reference to item 6 of the minute of meeting of the Accounts Commission of 19 November 2008 there was submitted and noted a report to the Council by the Chief Executive on the findings in the Best Value Audit follow-up report, together with a copy of the council's decision and its improvement plan.

7. Best Value Audits – progress update

There was submitted and noted a report by the Director of Public Reporting (Local Government) updating the Commission on progress with regard to the first round of Best Value audits.

8. Update on Best Value 2 developments

There was submitted a report by the Director of Public Reporting (Local Government) updating the Commission on progress of the Best Value 2 programme plan. Dates were currently being identified for consultation meetings with councils to take place in late May/early June and all members of the Commission were encouraged to attend if possible.

The position was noted.

9. Independent Review of Policing in Scotland by HMCICS

There was submitted a report by the Director of Public Reporting (Local Government) summarising the key points in the report published in January of the Independent Review of Policing in Scotland carried out by HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary.

The Commission agreed to note the report and the recommendations arising from the HMCICS Independent Review of Policing in Scotland, and expressed the hope that Audit Scotland would be included on the Policing in Scotland steering group.

10. Best Value in Police – Consultation Process and Selection of Pilots

There was submitted a report by the Director of Public Reporting (Local Government) setting out a recommended approach for consulting with key stakeholders on the proposed approach to Best Value audits of police authorities and forces by the Accounts Commission and HMCIC. The report also set out a timetable for undertaking and evaluating pilot audits during 2009 and proposals on the selection of pilot sites for consideration by the Commission.

Discussion took place on the draft consultation paper and it was agreed that wording should be clarified in paragraphs 3.4 and 3.6 particularly, with regard to the respective responsibilities of Chief Constables and Police Authorities and to clarify that Chief Constables were not subject to a duty of Best Value. With regard to Appendix 2 – Characteristics of a Best Value Police Authority – it was agreed that any specific comments should be emailed to David Pia.

Thereafter the Commission agreed to approve the proposed consultation approach, timetable and pilot sites subject to the above comments.

11. Audit Scotland Financial and Performance Information

There was submitted a report by the Director of Corporate Services detailing the Quarter 3 Audit Scotland Financial and Performance information.

The report was noted and it was agreed that consideration be given at a future meeting to how performance information more specific to the Accounts Commission could be developed.

[Action – future agenda item on performance information – Chair/Secretary]

12. Strategy Seminar

There were submitted notes of the key themes emerging from the Accounts Commission's recent strategy seminar and of the review of 2008/09, as prepared by Jim King and Adrienne Kelbie.

The reports were noted and it was agreed that action points be prepared from the notes. It was also agreed that consideration be given at the Commission's April meeting to the practicalities of Commission meetings being held in public.

[Action – preparation of action points – Jim King/Adrienne Kelbie; report on practicalities of meeting in public – Secretary]

13. Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 18 March and agreed that it would commence at 9.30am.