

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

MEETING 16 FEBRUARY 2012

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the meeting of the Accounts Commission held in the offices of Audit Scotland at 18 George Street, Edinburgh, on Thursday, 19 January 2012, at 10am

PRESENT: John Baillie (Chair)
Michael Ash
Allan Campbell
Sandy Cumming
Colin Duncan
James King
Bill McQueen
Christine May
Linda Pollock
Graham Sharp
Douglas Sinclair (Deputy Chair)

IN ATTENDANCE: Barbara Hurst, Director of Performance Audit [Item 13]
Fraser McKinlay, Controller of Audit and Director of Best Value and Scrutiny Improvement (BVSI)
Fiona Kordiak, Director of Audit Services
Paul Reilly, Secretary and Business Manager
Gordon Neil, Portfolio Manager, BVSI [Items 8 and 9]
Kathrine Sibbald, Project Manager, BVSI [Items 8 and 9]
Martin Walker, Assistant Director, Best Value and Scrutiny Improvement [Item 12]
Lorna Skirving, Portfolio Manager (Best Value), BVSI [Item 12]
Angela Cullen, Assistant Director, Performance Audit Group [Item 13]
Tricia Meldrum, Portfolio Manager (Health and Sport), Performance Audit Group, [Item 13]
Carolyn Smith, Project Manager, Performance Audit Group [Item 13]

<u>Item No</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1.	Apologies for absence
2.	Declarations of interest
3.	Decisions on taking business in private
4.	Minutes of meeting of 15 December 2011
5.	Minutes of the meeting of the Performance Audit Committee of 9 December 2011
6.	Chair's introduction
7.	Update report by the Controller of Audit
8.	Best Value Audit – Dumfries and Galloway Fire and Rescue
9.	Best Value Audit – Fife Fire and Rescue
10.	Best Value Audit – Dumfries and Galloway Fire and Rescue

11. Best Value Audit – Fife Fire and Rescue
 12. How Councils Work 3 – Using cost information to inform decisions and improve performance
 13. Planning for the delivery of the Commonwealth Games 2014: progress report 2
 14. Any other business
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1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were submitted from Colin Peebles.

2. Declarations of interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

- Douglas Sinclair in items 9 and 11 as a former employee of Fife Council.
- Christine May in items 9 and 11 as a former member of Fife Council.

3. Decisions on taking business in private

The Commission agreed to take the following items in private:

Items 10 and 11, to allow deliberations on actions arising from their deliberation

Items 12 and 13, as they were draft reports.

4. Minutes of meetings of 15 December 2011

The minutes of the meeting of 15 December 2011 were submitted and approved.

5. Minutes of the meeting of the Performance Audit Committee of 9 December 2011

The minutes of the meeting of the Performance Audit Committee of 9 December 2011 were submitted and approved.

6. Chair's introduction

The Chair reported that:

- On 15 December 2011, he and the Deputy Chair met with Pat Watters, President of COSLA, to discuss matters of mutual interest.
- On 12 January 2012, he and the Deputy Chair met John Swinney MSP, the Cabinet Secretary, and Derek Mackay MSP, Minister Designate for Local Government and Planning, to discuss the Scottish Government's proposed review of community planning. Thereafter, he attended as an observer a meeting in the same vein between the Cabinet Secretary and representatives of COSLA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives in Scotland.

7. Update report by the Controller of Audit

The Commission considered and noted a report by the Controller of Audit providing an update on significant recent activity in relation to the audit of local government.

During discussion the Commission noted advice from the Controller of Audit that:

- He met with the Convenor of Strathclyde Fire and Rescue on 12 January 2012 about the 2010/11 annual audit report, upon which he would submit a report to the next meeting.
- He would submit a report to the next meeting on a proposed response by the Commission into the call for evidence by the Scottish Parliament's Local Government and Regeneration Committee in its inquiry into public services reform.
- He would submit a report to the next meeting on the recently published Bill on police and fire service reform.

Thereafter the Commission agreed to note the report.

8. Best Value Audit: Dumfries and Galloway Fire and Rescue

The Commission considered a report by the Secretary and Business Manager introducing the Best Value audit of Dumfries and Galloway Fire and Rescue, and seeking direction on how to proceed.

During discussion, the Commission agreed that the following issues be considered for inclusion in its report on an overview of the Best Value audit of fire and rescue services, to be published by the Commission later in 2012:

- Longer term trends in correlations between incidences of fires and risk management, including the period prior to the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005
- Relations between fire and rescue services and councils
- Lessons learned in joint working between different fire and rescue services, or between fire and rescue services and other emergency services.

(Action: Director of BVSI)

The Commission sought clarification and further explanation from the Controller of Audit and the audit team on a number of points in the report.

The Commission agreed to note the report and to consider in private its findings.

9. Best Value Audit – Fife Fire and Rescue

The Commission considered a report by the Secretary and Business Manager introducing the Best Value audit of Fife Fire and Rescue, and seeking direction on how to proceed.

During discussion, the Commission agreed that its report on an overview of the Best Value audit of fire and rescue services, to be considered in 2012, address the following issues:

- A review of levels and quality of scrutiny between joint fire boards and unitary council fire committees
- Crewing levels on fire appliances.

(Action: Director of BVSI)

The Commission sought clarification and further explanation from the Controller of Audit and the audit team on a number of points in the report. Arising therefrom, the Commission noted advice from the Controller of Audit that, in relation to a point in the report on reserves, the service can, as part of the Council, have access, if warranted, to the reserves of the Council.

The Commission agreed to note the report and to consider in private its findings.

10. Best Value Audit: Dumfries and Galloway Fire and Rescue (in private)

The Commission agreed that this item be held in private to allow it to consider actions in relation to its findings.

Thereafter, the Commission agreed to make findings as contained in the report to be published in early course.

11. Best Value Audit – Fife Fire and Rescue (in private)

The Commission agreed that this item be held in private to allow it to consider actions in relation to its findings.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed to make findings as contained in the report to be published in early course.

12. How Councils Work Series – cost information (in private)

The Commission considered a report by the Director of Best Value and Scrutiny Improvement on the draft of the third report in the 'How Councils Work' series, on councils using cost information.

The Commission:

- Agreed a number of revisions to the draft report
- Agreed that the publication arrangements include the following:
 - Publication on the Audit Scotland website, supported by a press release and podcast
 - Distribution of the report to all councillors in Scotland
 - A letter from the Chair to chief executives, highlighting the importance of the issues contained in the report and suggesting it could be used as part of the induction process for elected members following the election in May

- Production of a shorter summary report containing 'signposting' to the full report, the drafting of which to be overseen by the project sponsors, Bill McQueen and Graham Sharp
- Approved the draft report for publication, subject to consideration being given to a number of points raised in discussion and to further consultation with the project sponsors.

13. Planning for the delivery of the Commonwealth Games 2014: progress report 2 (in private)

The Commission considered a draft report by the Director of Performance Audit on the progress of the 2014 Commonwealth games project, prepared jointly on behalf of the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland.

During discussion, the Commission:

- With reference to paragraph 4 of the minutes of meeting of the Performance Audit Committee of 9 December 2011, agreed that:
 - Legacy issues, including those in relation to the London 2012 Olympics, continue to be monitored
 - The progress of the Commonwealth Games 2014 project be monitored, with a view to considering at a later date the desirability of a further progress report
- Agreed a number of changes to the draft report
- Agreed that the draft report be issued for clearance with the Scottish Government.

Thereafter Commission approved the draft report, to be published on 22 March 2012, subject to consideration being given to a number of points raised in discussion and to further consultation with performance audit sponsors, Bill McQueen and Christine May.