

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

MEETING 14 MARCH 2013

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, 14 February 2013, at 10am

PRESENT: John Baillie (Chair)
Alan Campbell
Sandy Cumming
Colin Duncan
Jim King
Bill McQueen
Christine May
Colin Peebles
Linda Pollock
Graham Sharp
Douglas Sinclair (Deputy Chair)

IN ATTENDANCE: Barbara Hurst, Director of Performance Audit (PAG)
Fraser McKinlay, Controller of Audit
Paul Reilly, Secretary and Business Manager
Antony Clark, Assistant Director, Best Value and Scrutiny Improvement (BVS) [Items 9, 11 and 12]
Martin Walker, Assistant Director, BVS [Items 9]
Angela Cullen, Assistant Director, Performance Audit Group (PAG) [Items 8, 13 and 14]
Ronnie Nicol, Assistant Director, PAG [Item 13]
Angela Canning, Assistant Director, PAG [Item 13]
Mark MacPherson, Portfolio Manager, PAG [Item 9]
Lesley McGiffen, Portfolio Manager, BVS [Item 9]
Gordon Neill, Portfolio Manager, BVS [Item 9]
Fiona Selkirk, Project Manager, BVS [Item 9]
Carolyn Smith, Project Manager, PAG [Item 9]
Peter Worsdale, Project Manager, BVS [Items 9 and 15]
Dick Gill, Portfolio Manager, PAG [Item 14]
Michael Oliphant, Project Manager, PAG [Item 14]
Gordon Smail, Portfolio Manager, BVS [Item 15]

| <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 17 January 2013 |
| 5. | Minutes of meeting of Performance Audit Committee of 24 January 2013 |
| 6. | Chair's introduction |
| 7. | Update report by the Controller of Audit |

8. Improving engagement and reinforcing messages in Accounts Commission reports
9. Audits of Community Planning
10. Any other business
11. Audits of Community Planning
12. Improving Community Planning in Scotland – key messages
13. The Performance Audit Programme 2013/14
14. Performance audit – Major capital investment in councils
15. Local government in Scotland 2013

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence from Michael Ash were noted.

2. Declarations of interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

- Alan Campbell, in item 9, as a former member of various regional partnerships in Aberdeenshire, and item 13, as a former employee of Aberdeenshire Council.
- Christine May, in item 15, as a member of Fife Cultural Trust.

3. Decisions on taking business in private

It was proposed that items 11 to 15 should be taken in private as they contained draft reports and confidential issues.

4. Minutes of meeting of 17 January 2013

The minutes of the meeting of 17 January 2013 were submitted and approved, subject to noting that Colin Duncan should be removed from the list of those present.

5. Minutes of the Performance Audit Committee meeting of 24 January 2013

The minutes of the Performance Audit Committee meeting of 24 January 2013 were submitted and approved.

6. Chair's introduction

The Chair reported that:

- On 24 January, he attended meetings of Audit Scotland's Audit Committee and Board.
- Also on 24 January, he, along with Douglas Sinclair and Bill McQueen, attended a meeting of the Community Planning Partnership Audit Steering Group.
- On 7 February 2013, he chaired a meeting of the Strategic Scrutiny Group, also attended by Douglas Sinclair and Bill McQueen.
- Also on 7 February, he and Douglas Sinclair met Kevin Stewart MSP, Convener of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee of the Scottish Parliament.

7. Update report by the Controller of Audit

The Commission considered 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 Chair that he would shortly be meeting Kenneth Hogg, Director of Local Government and the Third Sector at the Scottish Government.

Thereafter the Commission agreed to note the report.

8. Improving engagement and reinforcing messages in Accounts Commission reports

The Commission considered a joint report by the Director of Performance Audit and Controller of Audit setting out proposals to improve how to engage with stakeholders about findings and recommendations in reports and reinforcing messages to encourage improvement.

During discussion the Commission agreed:

- The package of proposals as set out in the report, on the basis of priority being given to activities around advocacy, reinforcing messages and engaging with key local government stakeholders.
- That advocacy activities also go beyond local government stakeholders as appropriate, for example the third and private sectors.
- Accordingly, that as a working principle, the use of other activities set out in the report be applied selectively to each performance audit report.
- That the Director further consider how to better exploit new social media in promoting reports.

Actions: Director of Performance Audit

- To note the Commission at its annual strategy seminar would further consider issues around promotion, marketing and impact.

9. Audits of Community Planning

The Commission considered a report by the Secretary and Business Manager asking that it consider the reports of the three early audits of community planning in Aberdeen, North Ayrshire and Scottish Borders, produced by Audit Scotland for the Commission and the Auditor General for Scotland.

During discussion, the Commission sought clarification and further explanation from the Controller of Audit on a number of points in the audit reports.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed to note the reports and to consider in private how it wished to proceed.

10. Any other business

The Commission noted that there was no other business to be considered.

11. Audits of Community Planning [in private]

The Commission agreed that this item be held in private to allow it to consider actions in relation to the reports on the three early audits of community planning.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed to make findings in conjunction with the Auditor General for Scotland, to be published in early course.

The Chair thanked the audit teams for their work.

12. Improving Community Planning in Scotland – key messages [in private]

The Commission agreed that this item be held in private to allow it to consider a draft report.

The Commission considered a report by the Controller of Audit seeking approval of a draft report - produced jointly with the Auditor General for Scotland – setting out key messages around how community planning can be improved, drawing upon the three early community planning audits and previous wider work on community planning.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed to approve the draft report, subject to the report team considering a number of points raised in discussion.

The Chair thanked the report team for its work.

13. The Performance Audit programme 2013/14 [in private]

The Commission agreed that this item be held in private to allow it to discuss confidential issues.

The Commission considered a report by the Director of Performance Audit setting out proposals for additions to the performance audit programme for 2013/14.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed:

- To add the following areas to the programme for 2013/14:
 - Education spend and attainment
 - Procurement in local government

Action: Director of Performance Audit

- That option appraisal be part of the *How councils work* series, and that the Controller of Audit report further details in this regard to the Performance Audit Committee.

Action: Controller of Audit

- That the Director prepare a paper on wider discussion of the programme beyond 2013/14.

Action: Director of Performance Audit

- To note advice from the Director that a follow-up report on the *Commissioning social care* report, published on 1 March 2012, would be reported to a future meeting.

14. Performance audit – Major capital investment in councils [in private]

The Commission agreed that this item be held in private to allow it to consider a draft report.

The Commission considered a report by the Director of Performance Audit proposing a draft report, key messages and good practice guide on the performance audit of major capital investment in councils.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed:

- That the good practice guide be branded as part of the *How councils work* series.
- To approve the draft report, subject to the audit team considering a number of points raised in discussion and consulting further with the sponsors of the performance audit.

Action: Director of Performance Audit

The Chair thanked the audit team for its work.

15. Local government in Scotland 2013 – overview report [in private]

The Commission agreed that this item be held in private to allow it to consider a draft report.

The Commission considered a report by the Controller of Audit proposing a draft report on an overview of local government in Scotland in 2013.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed to approve the draft report, subject to the audit team considering a number of points raised in discussion and consulting further with the Chair, Deputy Chair and sponsors of the report.

Action: Controller of Audit

The Chair thanked the report team for its work.