

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

MEETING 9 MAY 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, 11 April 2013, at 10am

PRESENT: John Baillie (Chair)
Michael Ash
Alan Campbell
Sandy Cumming
Colin Duncan
Jim King
Linda Pollock
Graham Sharp
Douglas Sinclair (Deputy Chair)

IN ATTENDANCE: Fraser McKinlay, Controller of Audit
Paul Reilly, Secretary and Business Manager
Angela Cullen, Assistant Director, Performance Audit Group (PAG) [Items 7 and 11]
Angela Canning, Assistant Director, PAG [Item 9]
Martin Walker, Assistant Director, Best Value and Scrutiny Improvement Group (BVISI) [Item 10]
Gordon Neill, Portfolio Manager, BVISI [Item 10]
Tommy Yule, Project Manager, BVISI [Item 10]
Graeme Greenhill, Portfolio Manager, PAG [Item 11]
Gill Miller, Senior Performance Auditor, PAG [Item 11]

<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 14 March 2013
5.	Chair's introduction
6.	Update report by the Controller of Audit
7.	Format and distribution of reports
8.	Any other business
9.	Equality outcomes and mainstreaming equalities
10.	Joint report by Accounts Commission and Auditor General for Scotland: Managing early departures in the Scottish public sector
11.	Roads maintenance follow-up – an audit update

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Christine May, Bill McQueen and Colin Peebles.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Decisions on taking business in private

It was proposed that items 9 to 11 should be taken in private as they contained draft reports and confidential issues.

4. Minutes of meeting of 14 March 2013

The minutes of the meeting of 14 March 2013 were submitted and approved.

5. Chair's introduction

The Chair reported that:

- On 13 March he undertook various activities with the media in relation to the report *Major capital investment in councils*, which was published on 14 March.
- On 21 March he attended a meeting of the Audit Scotland Board.
- On 27 March, he undertook various activities with the media in relation to the *Local government overview* report, which was published on 28 March.
- Also on 27 March he, along with the Auditor General, briefed the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit Committee on the report on *Improving community planning in Scotland*.
- On 10 April he, along with the Auditor General, attended a meeting of the National Community Planning Group. The Group considered the same report.

Further in this regard, the Chair advised that he would be writing to the Chair of the National Community Planning Group to underline the need for it to take forward the range of actions set out in the report.

6. 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 agreed:

- That a representative of the Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland be included in the schedule of guest speakers for Commission meetings.
- That the Improvement Service's evaluation of its project to support self assessment and improvement planning in community planning partnerships be circulated to members.

Action: Secretary and Business Manager

Thereafter the Commission agreed to note the report.

7. Format and distribution of reports

The Commission considered a report by the Director of Performance Audit providing an update on the new format for national reports and the move to electronic distribution of reports.

During discussion the Commission agreed:

- That research in relation to internet usage be examined to ensure that the risk of excluding sections of the population from published reports is being managed.
- That Commission members continue in future to receive on request a hard copy of any published reports.
- That online versions of reports include as many navigational aids, such as a 'return to start' option, as is practicable.
- Approved the proposals in the report.
- Agreed that a group of members be convened, consisting of Michael Ash, Jim King and Douglas Sinclair, to review the standard introductory text used in published reports.
- To note advice from the Chair that, following discussions between him and Audit Scotland, appropriate use of the Commission logo and report description will be applied to all reports to Commission meetings and subsequent published reports.

Thereafter the Commission agreed to note the report.

8. Any other business

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

9. Equality outcomes and mainstreaming equalities [in private]

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

The Commission considered a report by the Chair of Audit Scotland's Diversity and Equality Steering Group proposing that the Commission, as a listed public authority covered by the specific duties in the Equality Act 2010, approve draft reports on (i) its equality outcomes and (ii) mainstreaming equalities.

During discussion, the Commission agreed:

- To approve the draft reports, subject to a number of points raised in discussion being reflected in the reports.
- That a six-monthly update on progress in relation to the issues set out in the report be made to the Commission.

Action: Chair, Audit Scotland Diversity and Equality Steering Group

10. Managing early departures in the Scottish public sector [in private]

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

The Commission considered a draft report by the Controller of Audit on Managing early departures from the Scottish public sector, prepared jointly on behalf of the Accounts Commission and the Auditor General.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed:

- To approve the draft report, subject to a number of points raised in discussion being reflected in the report.
- That the audit team liaise with the report's sponsors, Sandy Cumming and Jim King, and the Chair and Deputy Chair, in completing a final draft of the report.

Action: Controller of Audit

- To note advice from the Controller of Audit that issues around the motivation behind the use of early departures, such as expediency rather than as part of robust business planning, will be explored in more detail in the forthcoming performance audit *Scotland's Public Finances: workforce planning*.
- Agreed that, notwithstanding this, such an issue still be referred to in the *Managing early departures* report.
- To note advice from the Controller of Audit that he would consider how to ensure involvement of trade union and staff interests in the clearance procedure for the report.
- Further in this regard to note advice from the Director of Performance Audit that Unison are part of the reference group for the forthcoming performance audit *Scotland's Public Finances: workforce planning*.
- To note advice from the Controller of Audit that he would consider how to investigate in a piece of future work the different levels of enhancements used in early departure schemes.
- That it further consider at a future meeting how it wishes to make use of this style of report.

Action: Secretary and Business Manager and Controller of Audit

The Chair thanked the audit team for its work.

11. Roads maintenance follow-up – an audit update [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 'audit update' report on progress made since publication of *Maintaining Scotland's roads: a follow-up report*, in February 2011.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed:

- To approve the draft report, subject to a number of points raised in discussion being reflected in the report.
- That the audit team liaise with the report's original sponsors, Jim King and Christine May, in completing a final draft of the report.

Action: Director of Performance Audit

- That an update on progress in relation to the issues set out in the report be made to the Commission in around 18 months' time.
- To note advice from the Controller of Audit that roads maintenance features in the SOLACE benchmarking indicators project.
- That the Director consider how to ensure appropriate engagement with stakeholders, particularly COSLA, in relation to disseminating messages in the published report.

Action: Director of Performance Audit

The Chair thanked the audit team for its work.