

## **ANGUS COUNCIL**

MINUTE of HYBRID MEETING of the **SPECIAL SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Tuesday 24 September 2024 at 11.00am

**Present:** Councillors CRAIG FOTHERINGHAM, GAVIN NICOL, CHRIS BEATTIE, JULIE BELL, LYNNE DEVINE, IAIN GALL, ROSS GREIG, LOUISE NICOL, RONNIE PROCTOR (MBE), MARTIN SHEPHERD, LOIS SPEED and DEREK WANN.

Councillor FOTHERINGHAM, Convener, in the Chair.

**1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Heather Doran.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/STATEMENTS OF TRANSPARENCY**

There were no declarations of interest or statements of transparency made.

**3. ANGUS COUNCIL ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2023/24 AND ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT TO MEMBERS**

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 October 2023, there was submitted Joint Report No 284/24 by the Chief Executive and Director of Finance covering Audit Scotland's Annual Audit Report to members on the 2023/24 Audit of Angus Council and Angus Council Charitable Funds, asking members of the Committee to approve the 2023/24 Audited Annual Accounts of Angus Council and Angus Council Charitable Funds for signature.

The Auditor's report summarised the findings from the 2023/24 annual audit of Angus Council. The scope of the audit was set out in the Annual Audit Plan presented to the 23 April 2024 meeting of the Scrutiny and Audit Committee. The Report informed members with regards to Audit of 2023/24 annual accounts, Best Value, Financial Management, Financial Sustainability, Vision, Leadership and Governance, Use of resources to improve outcomes and provided an Action plan 2023/24 along with a summary of uncorrected misstatements.

The Auditor's report identified four new actions for the Council to consider from the 2023/24 audit and seven from the Best Value Thematic Report. This independent and external perspective was helpful and work was in hand to address these actions as shown within the action plan in Appendix 1 of the Auditor's report. Good progress had been made on prior year recommendations but for those actions not yet fully implemented, revised responses and timescales had been agreed by management, which were set out within Appendix 1 of the Report.

In relation to the Angus Council Charitable Funds 2023/24 Annual Accounts, the statements were prepared in accordance with the Charity Statement of Recommended Practice. The draft accounts for audit (30 June 2024) had been achieved. Statements were prepared in accordance with the Charity Statement of Recommended Practice.

Pauline Gillen, Audit Scotland, provided a detailed overview of the key areas of the Angus Council 2023/2024 Annual Audit Report and answered members' questions.

The Committee agreed: -

- (i) to note the content of Audit Scotland's Annual Audit Report Covering Letter appended as Appendix A to the Report;
- (ii) to note the content of Audit Scotland's Annual Audit Report to Members, appended as Appendix B to the Report;
- (iii) following scrutiny, to approve for signature, in accordance with the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2014, the 2023/24 Audited Annual Accounts of Angus Council and Angus Council Charitable Funds;

- (iv) to note the summary of the main movements within the Angus Council Audited Annual Accounts appended as Appendix C to the Report; and
- (v) to note the Key Messages and the 2023/24 Action Plan within the Annual Audit Report to Members.

#### **4. BEST VALUE THEMATIC WORK IN COUNCILS 2023/24**

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 October 2023, there was submitted Report No 285/24 by the Chief Executive presenting Audit Scotland's report on 'Workforce Innovation – how councils are responding to workforce challenges', which was part of Audit Scotland's Best Value thematic work in councils 2023/24.

The Report indicated that in 2023, the Accounts Commission/Audit Scotland had introduced a new approach to auditing Best Value in Scottish councils. The new approach continued to audit against the statutory duty but was now fully integrated with the annual audit at each council. It also included detailed work each year, focusing on a theme across all of the councils, which would be collated into a national report.

Audit Scotland's 2023/24 Report provided further assurance to members that Angus Council was working in a manner that was well aligned with the Best Value principles under review as part of the thematic audit. The Report included seven improvement actions along with the Council's management responses which were outlined in Section 6 of the Report. The improvement actions, along with the Council's management response, would be added to the Council's performance management system – Pentana - and reported to this Committee as part of the Corporate Governance improvement action update reports.

The Committee agreed: -

- (i) having reviewed, to note the content of Audit Scotland's Best Value thematic report: 'Workforce Innovation – how councils are responding to workforce challenges'; and
- (ii) to note the Key Messages and the Improvement Actions which had been included in Audit Scotland's Report.