
AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Report by the Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 May 2021

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with the Audit and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21 which presents the Committee's performance in relation to its Terms of Reference and the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting its purpose, relating to its Audit functions.**
- 1.2 It is important that the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee fully complies with best practice guidance on Audit Committees to ensure it can demonstrate its effectiveness as a scrutiny body (Audit functions) as a foundation for sound corporate governance for the Council.
- 1.3 The CIPFA Audit Committees Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2018 Edition (hereinafter referred to as CIPFA Audit Committees Guidance) includes the production of an annual report on the performance of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee against its remit (Audit functions) for submission to the Council. The Audit and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21 (Appendix 1) is presented for consideration. Scottish Borders Council continues to be a lead authority in adopting this best practice.
- 1.4 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee carried out self-assessments of Compliance with the Good Practice Principles Checklist and Evaluation of Effectiveness Toolkit from the CIPFA Audit Committees Guidance during the Informal Session on 8 March 2021 facilitated by the Chief Officer Audit & Risk. The self-assessments are appended to this report as Appendix 2 (Good Practice Principles) and Appendix 3 (Effectiveness) for consideration. The outcome of the self-assessments was a high degree of performance against the good practice principles and a high/medium degree of effectiveness, with areas of further improvement identified.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee:**
- a) Approves the Audit and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21 (Appendix 1) which incorporates its self-assessments (Appendices 2 and 3) using the CIPFA Audit Committees Guidance; and**
 - b) Agrees that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21 should be presented to the Council.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 It is important that the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee fully complies with best practice guidance on Audit Committees to ensure it can demonstrate its effectiveness as a scrutiny body (Audit functions) as a foundation for sound corporate governance.
- 3.2 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) issued an updated guidance note Audit Committees Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2018 Edition (hereinafter referred to as CIPFA Audit Committees Guidance). It incorporates CIPFA's 2018 Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police which sets out CIPFA's view of the role and functions of an Audit Committee.
- 3.3 The CIPFA Audit Committees Guidance includes the production of an annual report on the performance of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee against its remit of Audit functions for submission to the Council. The Audit and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21 (Appendix 1) is presented for consideration. Scottish Borders Council continues to be a lead authority in adopting this best practice.
- 3.4 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee carried out self-assessments of Compliance with the Good Practice Principles Checklist and Evaluation of Effectiveness Toolkit from the CIPFA Audit Committees Guidance during the Informal Session on 8 March 2021 facilitated by the Chief Officer Audit & Risk. The self-assessments are appended to this report as Appendix 2 (Good Practice Principles) and Appendix 3 (Effectiveness) for consideration.
- 3.5 The outcome of the self-assessments for the Committee was a high degree of performance against the good practice principles and a high/medium degree of effectiveness, recognising that regular training is important to enable them to fulfil their remit effectively. The Committee has identified the following further improvements to its effectiveness (Audit functions):
 - Gain insights on the efficacy of the Council's risk management framework through benchmarking with other organisations; and
 - Target its monitoring and scrutiny of the Best Value Action Plan delivery, to enhance the arrangements for ensuring value for money.
- 3.6 The Audit and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2020/21 is designed both to provide assurance to full Council and to provide some further actions for the Committee to improve its effectiveness (Audit functions).

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

- (a) The role of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee (Audit functions) includes the high level oversight of the effectiveness of the Council's systems of internal financial control, internal control and governance, including risk management.
- (b) There is a risk that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee does not fully comply with best practice guidance thus limiting its effectiveness as a scrutiny body (Audit functions) as a foundation for sound corporate governance. The completion of the annual self-assessment and identification and implementation of improvement actions as evidenced through this Annual Report will mitigate this risk.

4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

This is a routine good governance report for assurance purposes, not a new or revised policy or strategy for decision and, as a result, completion of an integrated impact assessment is not an applicable consideration.

4.4 **Acting Sustainably**

There are no direct economic, social or environmental issues with this report.

4.5 **Carbon Management**

There are no direct carbon emissions impacts as a result of this report.

4.6 **Rural Proofing**

This report does not relate to new or amended policy or strategy and as a result rural proofing is not an applicable consideration.

4.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

No changes to the Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation are required as a result of this report.

5 **CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The members of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee were engaged in the annual self-assessment process during the Informal Session on 8 March 2021 facilitated by the Chief Officer Audit & Risk.

Approved by

Cllr Stuart Bell, Chair of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Author(s)

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Background Papers:

Previous Minute Reference: Audit and Scrutiny Committee 22 October 2020;
Scottish Borders Council 5 November 2020

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