

Appendix 1.

Accounts Commission – New Best Value Audit

1.1.

At the Special General Meeting held on 22 February 2018, the Council noted:

1.1.1.

That, in Autumn 2016, the Accounts Commission introduced its new approach to the Best Value Audit, which coincided with the five-year appointment of new external auditors.

1.1.2.

That under the new arrangements, External Audit's Annual Report to Members and the Controller of Audit had an enhanced role, with a Best Value Assurance Report for each council presented to the Accounts Commission at least once in the five-year cycle.

1.1.3.

That the Council was one of the first six councils to be the subject of the New Best Value Audit.

1.1.4.

That the Audit Team's fieldwork was carried out in early March and at the end of May 2017, and consisted of interviews with individual elected members, officers and a range of community stakeholders, together with observing Council Committee and Sub-committee meetings and meetings of management teams.

1.1.5.

The final draft of the Best Value Assurance Report, presented to the Accounts Commission on 7 December 2017, and published on 14 December 2017, attached as Annex 1 to the joint report by the Chief Executive and the Executive Director of Corporate Services.

1.1.6.

The Accounts Commission's Findings on the Best Value Audit of Orkney Islands Council, Key Messages and Recommendations, as set out at pages 5, 8 and 9 and 52 respectively of the Best Value Assurance Report.

1.1.7.

That, within three months of publication of the Best Value Assurance Report by the Accounts Commission, there was a statutory requirement for the Best Value Assurance Report to be presented to a General Meeting of the Council.

1.1.8.

That, as soon as was practicable after the meeting referred to at paragraph 1.1 above, the Council must notify the Accounts Commission whether it had decided to accept any or all of the Accounts Commission's recommendations and what, if any, action the Council had decided to take in response to those recommendations.

2.2.

The Council resolved:

2.2.1.

That all of the Accounts Commission's recommendations, as undernoted, be accepted:

- The council must further increase the current pace of improvement and in particular ensure it makes progress with the following:
 - Developing a detailed workforce plan that considers future workforce needs, current capacity, supply and recruitment, skills and financial constraints.
 - Managing capital projects effectively to avoid slippage and the negative impact on delivering strategic priorities.
 - Longer-term financial planning to ensure the sustainability, feasibility and practicalities of current spending plans. This should be done with reference, also, to the Strategic Reserve Fund.
 - Implementation of the IT Strategy and Digital Strategy, including the associated capital programme and completion of the review of capacity.
- To support a culture of improvement, the council should build on the self-evaluation work already in place in services and further develop a corporate approach.
- The council should build on its good examples of community engagement and participation to improve consistency of approach across all the communities, including those that are 'hard to reach'.
- The council should set out how its activities will contribute to improved outcomes for communities so that it can evidence and monitor the impact.
- The council and its community planning partners should ensure clear performance management arrangements are in place to demonstrate that they are making progress towards delivering positive outcomes for the community.
- The council should consider how it can enhance its councillor training and development programme and encourage better uptake by councillors of personal development opportunities.

2.2.2.

That, in response to the Accounts Commission's recommendations, the Chief Executive should develop a Best Value Response Plan for submission to the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee scheduled for 17 April 2018.

2.2.3.

That, following approval of the Best Value Response Plan, each individual action point be placed within either the Council Plan or appropriate Service Plan, for the purposes of performance monitoring, management, scrutiny and Public Performance Reporting.