



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Minute of the Advisory Audit Board (AAB) meeting held Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 12 noon

Present:

- Andy Shaw, Chair
- Claire Baker MSP
- Jackson Carlaw MSP
- Claire Robertson
- David Watt

In attendance:

- David McGill, Clerk/Chief Executive
- Michelle Hegarty, Assistant Chief Executive
- Sara Glass, Head of Financial Governance
- Lis Craig, Financial Controller
- Mark Taylor, Audit Scotland
- Claire Gardiner, Audit Scotland
- Inire Evong, Audit Scotland
- Andy Munro, Head of Internal Audit
- Lisa Creamer, Secretariat

Item 1: Pre-meeting between AAB Members, Audit Scotland and SPCB Head of Internal Audit

1.1 The Chair confirmed that no pre-meeting was required.

Item 2: Minutes of Meeting and matters arising from 16 June 2021

2.1 Members noted that the AAB meeting which was scheduled for 6 June 2021 was cancelled due to technical difficulties. Members' questions and other matters arising from the papers were sent to Lis Craig and Andy Munro directly and were responded to by correspondence.

Item 3: Matters Arising

3.1 There were no matters arising.

Item 4: Finance Office: SPCB Annual Report and Accounts 2020/21

4.1 Lis Craig introduced the report and advised that, despite the challenges of remote working and auditing, the Annual Report would be presented to the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body on 23 September and to the AGS for sign-off on 27 September per the original timetable.

4.2 The AAB noted the report and thanked Lis Craig and her colleagues for early sight of the report which enabled early comment and feedback.

4.3 Responding to a specific question from David Watt, Lis Craig offered to facilitate a discussion with AAB Members on the format of future Annual Reports.

ACTION: Lis Craig to discuss the format of future Annual Reports with AAB Members.

Item 5: Audit Scotland

AAB(SEP21)02 - ISA 580: Letter of Representation and Draft Audit Opinion

5.1 Mark Taylor presented the draft letter of representation advising that this has been prepared for signing by David McGill as the Accountable Officer for the SPCB. The letter is a formal requirement of the audit process in accordance with International Audit Standards.

5.2 Mark Taylor further spoke to the draft unmodified audit opinion and confirmed that no substantive changes were anticipated as audit work was now essentially complete.

AAB(SEP21)03 - Draft 2020/21 Annual Audit Report

5.3 Mark Taylor confirmed that the annual audit report had concluded with positive outcomes.

5.4 The Chair thanked Mr Taylor and his colleagues for the extensive work performed, particularly in meeting the previously agreed timetable taking account of the challenges of auditing remotely.

Item 6: Internal Audit

AAB(SEP21)04 - Review of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses

6.1 Andy Munro presented the report and confirmed that while some matters required further explanation from Members and former members, the review had concluded positively with no significant matters arising.

6.2 AAB members noted that the recommendations in the report would be added to the follow up of recommendations tracker and would remain in place until the relevant members and former members had been contacted and had responded to the Allowances Office.

AAB(SEP21)05 - Review of Covid-19 Response

6.3 Andy Munro presented the report and confirmed that only minor housekeeping matters had been identified by the audit review and testing.

The COVID19 Working Group, established by Leadership Group to oversee the Parliament's response to the global health emergency, has maintained a clear audit trail of decisions and actions and these are supported by clear evidence. The AAB noted and approved the report.

AAB(SEP21)06 - Follow Up of Previously Agreed Audit Recommendations

6.4 Andy Munro spoke to this paper and the AAB were content to note the recommendations and the removal of actions now fully implemented or no longer required.

AAB(SEP21)07 - Annual Assurance Report to the Accountable Officer 2020/21

6.5 Andy Munro presented this report which provided a summary of audit activity during 2020/21. He advised that this report had been sent to David McGill as accountable officer to form part of the wider assurance arrangements required to complete the Governance Statement in the Annual report and Accounts. The AAB noted and approved the report.

AAB(SEP21)08 - Draft AAB Report to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2020/21

6.6 The Chair introduced this report and noted that independent AAB Members had been supporting and advising Officeholders on matters beyond their respective annual report and accounts.

6.7 The AAB approved the report noting that it would be considered by the SPCB at its next meeting.

AAB(SEP21)09 - Internal Audit Plan 2021/22

6.8 The AAB confirmed that it had received the Internal Audit Plan in June 2021 and had offered comment and feedback directly to Andy Munro.

Item 7: Strategic Updates

COVID-19 Response

7.1 Michelle Hegarty provided an update on the current COVID-19 response to gradually bringing back services.

7.2 A gradual phased resumption stages on-site had taken place so far and more services had resumed post-summer recess taking account of the requirements of face masks and one-metre distancing. Michele Hegarty further advised that due to one-metre distancing, all Members cannot be facilitated in the Chamber at one time and remote voting continues to operate and is being supported as a matter of priority.

7.3 The AAB was informed of how the Opening Ceremony had been risk assessed and that further pre-planned public engagement is planned to resume in the calendar year.

Session 6

7.4 David McGill provided an overview of the session ahead. He noted it is now four months on from the Scottish Election with 43 new members having successfully received inductions, recruited staff and were in the process of securing local offices. David McGill spoke of the likely priorities for the Scottish Parliamentary Service in the coming years.

Item 8: Strategic Risk Register Update

8.1 Andy Munro provided a verbal update on risk management arrangements and confirmed that independent members of the AAB will be invited to participate in a short risk workshop in early 2022. Work to revise and refresh the strategic risk register was underway and will be taken forward following the imminent publication of the session 6 Strategic Plan for the Scottish Parliament. The AAB noted the update.

Item 9: AAB: Future Agenda Planner and AOCB

9.1 The AAB agreed the future agenda planner.

9.2 Mark Taylor noted that audits timetables across Scotland are running roughly 4 months late and it is his intention to present the 2021/22 Audit Plan to the March 2022 AAB meeting.

Time and date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held at 12:30pm on 15 December 2021.