



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# **Minute of the Advisory Audit Board (AAB) meeting held Wednesday 17 March 2021 at 12 noon**

## **Present:**

- Jean Couper CBE, Chair
- Claire Robertson
- Andy Shaw
- 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
- Andy Munro, Head of Internal Audit
- Lisa Creamer, Secretariat

## **Apologies:**

- Jackson Carlaw MSP
- Andy Wightman MSP

## **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**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 December 2020 were agreed.

2.2 There were no matters arising.

## **Item 3: COVID 19**

### COVID-19 Response Update

3.1 Michelle Hegarty spoke to the ongoing work of the COVID-19 Working Group in responding to the global health emergency. Ms Hegarty advised that the route map remains fluid and the focus continues to be on ensuring the continuity of safe and sustainable parliamentary business.

3.2 Ms Hegarty advised that a cluster of COVID-19 positive tests was identified in the Parliament building. The cluster was contained to a specific workspace and all individuals affected have since recovered. The incident was managed with expert external advice and parliamentary business was able to continue.

## **Item 4: Audit Scotland**

### **AAB(MAR21)01 – Audit Scotland: 2020/21 Audit Plan**

4.1 Mark Taylor and Claire Gardiner spoke to the SPCB Audit Plan for 2020/21. Mr Taylor advised that the plan placed emphasis on the potential impact of COVID-19 and EU withdrawal on public bodies in Scotland and he confirmed that the audit approach would include seeking assurance on these issues. Ms Gardiner explained the detailed audit approach by identifying other inherent risks noting that these issues, while not specific to the SPCB, contribute to the audit approach to all public bodies in Scotland. The AAB thanked Mr Taylor and Ms Gardiner and approved Audit Scotland's 2020/21 Audit Plan.

## **Item 5: Finance Office**

### **AAB(MAR21)02 – Update on the National Fraud Initiative**

5.1 Lis Craig spoke to the report and explained that, while there have been more matches identified than in previous years, the number of records of higher risk was decreasing. Ms Craig further advised that the review would be completed during the summer months and a final report would be provided to the AAB at its September 2021 meeting.

### **Verbal report - Update on Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme**

5.2 Sara Glass provided an update on the headline changes to the Scheme including the Start-Up provision, the increased flexibility of certain provisions, Members and staff travel, the introduction of payment cards and the Edinburgh accommodation provision.

5.3 Ms Glass further confirmed that the new scheme will take effect from Session 6 and the new system to administer claims for reimbursement will also go live in May 2021.

## **Item 6: Internal Audit**

### **AAB(MAR21)03 - 2020/21 Status Report**

6.1 Andy Munro spoke to the 2020/21 Status Report and advised that there have changes to the original plan, to accommodate priorities of staff required to participate in certain audit reviews and to respond to emerging matters associated with the Scottish Parliamentary Service's response to the global health emergency. Mr Munro confirmed that he remains confident in being able to provide an annual assurance report to the Accountable Officer in September 2021.

### **AAB(MAR21)04 – Review of Contractor Compliance – Use of Sub Contractors**

6.2 Andy Munro spoke to the report which focused on the due diligence arrangements that key contractors have in place prior to appointing sub-contractors to work on the Holyrood campus. Mr Munro confirmed that the review had concluded satisfactorily, some areas for further management attention had been identified. Mr Munro further confirmed that the observations and recommendations contained in the report had been welcomed by The Head of Facilities Management. Mr Munro added that he was content that the actions agreed would manage the risks identified.

### **AAB(MAR21)05 – Review of Purchasing and Payments**

6.4 Mr Munro advised that the review was performed to provide assurance that inherent risks associated with staff working remotely and under pressure were being sufficiently managed. Mr Munro confirmed that the review had concluded positively with only one minor matter for management action.

## **Item 7: Risk Register Update**

7.1 AAB members noted the update report and agreed the updates.

7.2 It was suggested risks 2, 3 and 7 may be better grouped together. It was queried whether risk 16 should still be a 12 and if this was overcautious.

## **Item 8: Future Agenda Planner and AOB**

8.1 Andy Munro spoke to the Agenda Planner and invited AAB Members to consider items for future strategic updates.

8.2 On behalf of the Scottish Parliament, David McGill thanked and paid tribute to Mrs Jean Cooper for her service as an AAB Member since 2012. Mr McGill confirmed that Mrs Cooper will stand down from the AAB on 31 May 2021 following the end of her extended term of appointment. Mr McGill made particular mention of the expert advice that Mrs Cooper had provided himself, his predecessor and the SPCB during her term as an AAB Member and as Chair. Mr McGill further confirmed that the Presiding Officer has now written to Andy Shaw to confirm his appointment as AAB Chair from 1 June 2021.

## **Item 9: Time and date of next meeting**

9.1 The next meeting will be held at 12:00pm on 23 June 2021 via Microsoft Teams.