



## **Audit and Risk Committee minutes**

**Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority Offices, 14 The Square,  
Grantown on Spey [Online]**

**08 November 2024 at 09.00am**

### **Present:**

Fiona McLean (Chair)

Peter Cosgrove (Deputy Chair)

Bill Lobban

Geva Blackett

Paul Gibb

Duncan Miller

### **In Attendance**

Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations

Paul Davison, Information Manager

Gregory Oduor, Mazars

Tom Reid, Mazars

Stephanie Hume, Azets

Karen Johnstone, Clerk to the Board

### **Apologies:**

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO

### **Welcome and introduction**

1. Fiona McLean, the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **Approval of minutes of previous meeting**

2. The draft minutes of the confidential meeting on the 27 September were approved with no amendments.



## Matters arising not covered in agenda

3. There were no matters raised.

Ref	Action Detail	Who	When	Status
24/11/23	Review accounts figure for consultancies (page 68)	Louise and David	Look when finalise the 23 / 24 accounts, highlight to the Committee at that point.  Reviewed and corrected the figure by Mazars, will come with draft accounts.	Closed
27/06/24	At para 15b i. Monthly update on progress to be provided by officers to the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.	David and Louise	monthly updates have been provided, either directly to the chair and vice-chair, or amongst the meeting papers for the whole committee.	Closed
27/06/24	At para 19a ii. Add procurement at 12th risk (strategic risk register) At para 19c Update wording on Impact description on risk 7 (C2030 risk register) At para 19d Review and amend (as appropriate) the	David		Closed



	probability score for risk 4 (C2030 risk register)			
27/09/24	At para 20i i.Update on internal audit view on financial scenario planning to be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee	David and Stephanie	At the end of the 24/25 financial year.	In hand
27/09/24	At para 36i ii.Further update on progress made to Procurement Action Plan At para 36ii iii.CEO to mention the impact the Procurement Officer is making in the organisation within his next CEO report for Board meeting on 22 November 2024.	Louise  Grant	To next meeting on 8 November 2024  Next Formal Board meeting on 22 November 2024	In hand  In hand

## Declarations of interest

4. There were no declarations of interest.

## Update on completion of final accounts 2023 / 24

5. Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations gave a verbal update on the final accounts for 2023 / 24.
6. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the verbal update and made the following comments and observations:
- a) Chair of the committee commented that they were aware there would be delays but reassured 2024 / 25 audit process will run more smoothly.
  - b) Head of Finance and Corporate Operations noted they received a late query and concerned about it being raised at this stage, Tom Reid, Mazars agreed to discuss



this with the team and give feedback to Head of Finance and Corporate Operations. It was noted that Mazars are confident the final accounts will be signed off by the end of November 2024.

7. The Audit and Risk Committee noted the verbal update.
8. Action points arising:
  - i. Tom Reid, Mazars, to return an update to Head of Finance and Corporate Operations about a last-minute request.

### **Internal audit report management action to follow up (Paper 1)**

9. Stephanie Hume, Azets presented the paper showing internal auditor's independent overview of management action taken on previous internal audit recommendations raised and agreed. The follow up review work reported here is part of the internal audit programme agreed for 2024 / 25.
10. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the report and made the following comments and observations:
  - a) Head of Finance and Corporate Operations raised a concern the Park Authority are feeling more of the recommendations are complete than the Azets team; a meeting will be arranged to discuss what further evidence is required to progress these items.
  - b) Discussions were had around the wording of "incomplete" and "partially complete". Stephanie Hume, Azets noted if a large amount of work has not been started it is rated incomplete. If work has already begun on the project, it is rated partially complete. It was noted that the committee feel a more transparent wording would be more suitable, Stephanie Hume, Azets agreed to look at potentially changing the wording.
  - c) CEO highlighted the Business Continuity Planning is in the process of being tendered and further information will be brought to the Committee in due course.
11. The Audit and Risk Committee noted the paper.
12. Actions:
  - i. A meeting between Azets and Head of Finance and Corporate Operations to discuss the evidence required to complete outstanding actions.



- ii. Stephanie Hume, Azets to look at potentially changing the wording "incomplete" and "partially complete" to something more transparent.

## **Internal audit progress report (Paper 2)**

- 13. Stephanie Hume, Azets presented the paper which sets out the report on progress against the internal audit programme for 2024 / 25 prepared by Azets.
- 14. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the report and made the following comments and observations:
  - a) CEO noted that with the Committee's agreement, the cyber security audit will be delayed until the next financial year; work to gain the cyber essentials plus accreditation is underway and any audit work would be a duplication of this. It was noted the Committee would be informed of the outcome of the accreditation process.
  - b) CEO highlighted that the approach to shared services is currently under review, and therefore this would not be an appropriate time to carry out the audit; therefore, with the Committee's agreement, this project would also be delayed until the next financial year.
  - c) It was suggested to the Committee to replace the cyber security and shared services audits with an audit of recruitment and continuation of the financial planning work carried out earlier in the year. The Committee and auditors agreed to this.
- 15. The Audit and Risk Committee noted the paper.
- 16. Actions:
  - i. Officers to carry out a recruitment audit and a continuation of the financial planning audit within the current financial year.

## **Strategic risk register (Paper 3)**

- 17. Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations presented the paper which supports a review by the Committee of the Park Authority's strategic risk management position.
- 18. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the report and made the following comments and observations:



- a) Clarity was sought on the financial resources for Cairngorms 2030 and if funding for the active transport project was the only issue. CEO explained the main issue was around Transport Scotland's Active Travel funding, noting they have not released funding owing to ongoing issues at a national level. The budget will be released on 04 December revealing the Active Travel budget for the next financial year. CEO noted there are currently discussions ongoing between Transport Scotland and Ministers regarding funding for the design phase of the Active Travel work. CEO remains relatively confident around the design funding, however If not received, they will look at within the Cairngorms 2030 project and potential for other additional external funding.
- b) Clarity was sought on Item 3 on the risk register, commenting on stringent responsibilities of those managing construction work on site, and questioning if staff have sufficient training for these projects. CEO explained that staff are currently being upskilled and trained on the specifics of Construction Design Management (CDM) and contract requirements, while taking forward two smaller contracts initially before starting larger contracts, thus ensuring staff have the knowledge, skills and expertise to carry this out correctly. It was suggested to update the risk register to show that training is already being delivered. Officers agreed to update this.
- c) A question was raised regarding the increase in risk in systems development. Head of Finance and Corporate Operations noted that there have been a lot of systematic changes, which take a while to become embedded in the organisation but highlighted that the workforce has taken the improvements easily, but the ongoing change does put pressure on staff. CEO commented that in the past 18 months, the Park Authority has moved from analogue systems to digital systems, along with a new finance system to be implemented, which will help moving forward.

19. The Audit and Risk Committee noted the paper.

20. Actions:

- i. Update the risk register to show upskilling and training is being delivered.

## **Procurement action plan (Paper 4)**

21. Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations presented the paper which sets out an action plan towards improvement of the Park Authority's procurement processes, procedures and internal controls. It has been developed in response to the



Internal Audit review of procurement carried out by Azets as part of the approved 2023 / 24 audit programme.

22. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the report and made the following comments and observations:

- a) The Committee acknowledged the improvements since Mikko Saari, Procurement Officer joined the Park Authority.

23. The Audit and Risk Committee noted the paper.

24. Actions: None.

### **Information requests and complaints update (Paper 5)**

25. Paul Davison, Information Manager presented the paper providing an update on the number of information requests, and key performance measures in meeting them, under Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOISA)/ Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations (EIR) and Data protection arrangements since September 2023 and focusing on financial years 2023 / 24 and 2024 / 25 (Q1 & 2).

26. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the report and made the following comments and observations:

- a) A question was raised regarding the increase in FOISA requests. Information Manager noted this was down to the interpretation of the request, whether they are requesting information such as a report, and not specifically requesting environmental information.
- b) A board member questioned if it was possible to see how many requestees there are to view a clearer pattern. Information manager noted it is largely independent requests, with occasionally the same person requesting. Information manager noted he would look into this and bring back to the Committee in the future. It was highlighted that staff do not see the names of those requesting information as this is best practice in processing requests.
- c) CEO commented that we do not receive a large amount of FOISA requests as the organisation is largely open; board meeting and papers are online, staff are open with public, and information is shared wherever possible.

27. The Audit and Risk Committee noted the paper.



28.Actions:

- i. Information manager to provide Committee members with the number of requestees for FOISA.

29.AOBC

30.Motion to take the next item in confidential session.

31.The public business of the meeting concluded at 09.49AM

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27/09/24	At para 20i iv.Update on internal audit view on financial scenario planning to be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee	David and Stephanie	At the end of the 24/25 financial year.	
27/09/24	At para 36i v.Further update on progress made to Procurement Action Plan At para 36ii vi.CEO to mention the impact the Procurement Officer is making in the organisation within his next CEO report for Board	Louise  Grant	To next meeting on 8 November 2024  Next Formal Board meeting on 22 November 2024	Closed





	meeting on 22 November 2024.			
From today's meeting				
08/11/24	At para 6b i. Tom Reid, Mazars, to return an update to Head of Finance and Corporate Operations about a last-minute request.	Louise/ Tom	Item now cleared (14.11.24)	Closed
08/11/24	At para 10a i. A meeting between Azets and Head of Finance and Corporate Operations to discuss examples of what evidence is required to complete outstanding actions. At para 10b ii. Stephanie Hume, Azets to look at potentially changing the wording "incomplete" and "partially complete" to something more transparent.	Louise/ Stephanie  Stephanie		
08/11/24	At para 10c i. Officers to carry out a recruitment audit and a financial planning audit within the current financial year.	David/ Louise		



08/11/24	At para 18b i. Update the risk register to show upskilling and training Is being delivered.	David/ Louise		
08/11/24	At para 26b i. Information manager to provide Committee members with the number of requestees for FOISA.	Paul		