

Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 8 May 2018

Accounts Commission report on Edinburgh Schools

Item number 7.4
Report number
Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments:

Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to highlight to Committee that the Accounts Commission has recently published a report in relation to Edinburgh Schools and in particular the closure of multiple schools in 2016.

The Accounts Commission report dated 3 April 2018 is attached in the Appendix to this report.

It should be noted that the Accounts Commission report only looks at historical issues and this report does not contain any details in relation to the recent concerns about inspections at Oxfords Primary School. These and other contractual issues regarding the Council's relationship with the Edinburgh Schools Partnership will be reported to Council or appropriate Committee later this year.

Accounts Commission report on Edinburgh schools

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee is requested to note the content of the Accounts Commission report.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Code of Audit Practice requires auditors, at the conclusion of each year's audit, to produce a report summarising the significant matters arising from the audit.
- 2.2 The annual audit report for City of Edinburgh Council for 2016/17 from Scott Moncrief provided an update on a number of significant matters in which the Accounts Commission has an interest. One area related to the large scale closure of schools in Edinburgh following the collapse of a section of brickwork wall at Oxfangs Primary School.
- 2.3 The Controller of Audit decided to use their reporting powers to bring this issue and subsequent developments to the Commission's attention.

3. Main report

- 3.1 The report by the Accounts Commission is attached in the Appendix to this report and its content and conclusions are self-explanatory.
- 3.2 By way of further update, the Council continues to take comprehensive legal advice in relation to the contract and the obligations of ESP. The Council remains in complex negotiations with ESP with regard to the initial incident and school closures in 2016, the issues highlighted by Professor John Cole in his independent report and the latest issues identified across the PPP1 estate. Whilst recognising the inherent complexity of the contractual arrangements, the Council's position remains that ESP will be held fully accountable for any failures in the provision of services to the Council and where necessary and appropriate formal legal action will be taken.
- 3.3 With regard to the inspections of the wider estate, the Council will continue to take appropriate action where issues are identified. A further update on progress will be provided to Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee later this year.

It should be noted that the Accounts Commission report only looks at historical issues and this report does not contain any details in relation to the recent concerns about

inspections at Oxfangs Primary School. These and other contractual issues regarding the Council's relationship with the Edinburgh Schools Partnership will be reported to Council or appropriate Committee later this year.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 The report notes that the council responded in a fast, transparent and comprehensive way to the events in 2016.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no financial impacts arising directly from this report.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 Failure to properly maintain the Council's property estate could have significant risk implications for the Council. This risk is being actively managed.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 None.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 None.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Not applicable.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [City of Edinburgh Council – 2016/17 Annual Audit Report to the Council and the Controller of Audit](#)

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Report by the Accounts Commission into Edinburgh Schools

Appendix 1

Link to the [Report by the Accounts Commission into Edinburgh Schools](#)