



SNOWY MONARO
REGIONAL COUNCIL

Minutes

Audit Risk And Improvement Committee Meeting

27 September 2021

**AUDIT RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM, 81 COMMISSIONER STREET, COOMA NSW 2630
ON MONDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 2021**

MINUTES

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**MINUTES OF THE AUDIT RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM, 81 COMMISSIONER STREET, COOMA NSW 2630**

**ON MONDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER 2021
COMMENCING AT 10.06AM**

PRESENT:

Voting Attendees: Miles Pearson, Independent Member (*A/g Chair*)
John Barbeler, Independent Member
Councillor Anne Maslin, Council Member

Non-Voting Attendees: Peter Bascomb, Chief Executive Officer

Guests: David Rawlings, Chief Strategy Officer
John Bingham, Chief Financial Officer
Sharon Gourlay, Systems Accountant
Jacqueline Sullivan, Management Accountant
Lawrissa Chan, Director - Financial Audit - Audit Office of NSW
Kalina Koloff, Chief Executive Officer CRJO
Sandra McEwan (Secretariat)

APOLOGIES: Melissa Tooke, Independent Member

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

Mr Pearson accepted the nomination of A/g Chair and opened the meeting at 10.06am with Acknowledgement of Country and showing respect to the First Custodians of Snowy Monaro Lands.

Mr Bascomb gave a brief introduction to Mr Bingham, Chief Financial Officer.

John Bingham, Chief Financial Officer left the meeting at 10.10am.

2. APOLOGIES

An apology for the meeting was received from Melissa Tooke, Independent Member.

3. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS/CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Nil.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4.1 AUDIT RISK AND IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 15 JUNE 2021

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

ARIC26/21

THAT the minutes of the Audit Risk And Improvement Committee Meeting held on 15 June 2021 are confirmed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

Moved Mr Barbeler

Seconded Mr Pearson

CARRIED

5. BUSINESS ARISING

5.1 ARIC RESOLUTION UPDATES

Mr Pearson requested that ARIC Resolution updates be placed on the Agenda under Business Arising in future.

ATTENDANCE OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER CRJO

Kalina Koloff, Chief Executive Officer CRJO JOINED THE MEETING AT 10.15AM.

6. PRESENTATIONS

6.1 CRJO PROPOSAL FOR SHARED INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

Kalina Koloff, Chief Executive Officer CRJO gave a brief presentation on the CRJO proposal for shared internal audit service.

Kalina Koloff, Chief Executive Officer CRJO left the meeting at 10.52am.

7. SPECIAL AGENDA ITEMS

Nil.

Attendance of Director – Financial Audit, Audit Office NSW, Systems Accountant and Management Accountant

Lawrissa Chan, Director – Financial Audit, Audit Office NSW; Sharon Gourlay, Systems Accountant; and Jacqueline Sullivan, Management Accountant joined the meeting at 10.55am.

8. REPORTS

8.2 INTERIM AUDIT MANAGEMENT LETTER

Record No: I21/199

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Chief Strategy Officer
Key Theme:	4. Leadership Outcomes
CSP Community Strategy:	10.2 Sound governance practices direct Council business and decision making
Delivery Program Objectives:	10.2.1 Independent audit and risk framework drives accountability
Attachments:	1. Interim Audit 2021 Management Letter

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Audit Office of NSW has provided Council with the Management Letter on the Interim Phase of the current year’s audit. The Audit Office will present on the report to ARIC.

The following officer’s recommendation is submitted for ARIC’s consideration.

Discussion on Interim Audit Management Letter:		
The Audit Office presented the report to ARIC.		
The Committee were very concerned on the number of overdue prior year and current year audit issues and requested prompt action be taken to rectify.		
COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION		ARIC27/21
That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee note the information in the Interim Audit Management Letter and requested prompt action to rectify unresolved issues.		
Moved Mr Barbeler	Seconded Mr Pearson	CARRIED

Lawrissa Chan, Director – Financial Audit, Audit Office NSW left the meeting at 11.38am.

8.3 DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR PERIOD ENDING 30 JUNE 2021

Record No: I21/227

Responsible Officer:	Chief Strategy Officer
Author:	Management Accountant
Key Theme:	4. Leadership Outcomes
CSP Community Strategy:	11.2 Council utilises sound fiscal management practices, pursues and attracts other sources of income
Delivery Program Objectives:	11.2.2 Provision of statutory reporting enables our leaders to make decisions on Council’s financial sustainability
Attachments:	Nil
Cost Centre	Financial Services
Project	Annual Financial Statements 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council’s draft financial statements are nearly at the stage of being forwarded to the external auditors. In line with the annual financial statements plan the draft statements and covering report are provided to ARIC for review.

The financial statements show that the Council has been impacted heavily by reductions in a range of revenue types. Compared to the planned position of the Council a lot lower revenue was received from capital grants than was anticipated. This is offset by lower capital expenditure than planned, but affects the operating result before capital grants.

Expenditure was contained within budget. Unfortunately the planned budget incorporated a negative cash flow. This has impacted on the internal cash reserves of the Council. The cash position at 30 June was impacted (in the order of \$2million) by the fact that Council had a number of grant projects which had incurred expenditure, but for which the milestones that the funds can be claimed back had not then been reached. This will supplement cash in the current year.

Debtors are also considerably higher than usual and the current focus on restarting processes to recover those outstanding amounts will also supplement cash. Recovery actions were on hold following the fire events and initial rounds of COVID impacts. It is expected that the level of debtors will remain higher than usual due to the economic impacts the region has seen recently.

The following officer's recommendation is submitted for ARIC's consideration.

Discussion on Draft Financial Statements for period ending 30 June 2021:

The Committee expressed serious concerns on the Council's financial situation noting a reported net operating deficit before capital grants of \$13.1m, a negative operating performance ratio of 13.25% and (as for 2019/20 year) a nil unrestricted cash balance. The \$13.1m deficit compared to a forecast deficit of \$5.8m advised to ARIC at the 15 June 2021 meeting, a 2020/21 budget deficit of \$6.4m and a prior year actual deficit of \$4.7m.

It was also noted that liabilities relating to legacy landfill sites have not been quantified and are currently shown as contingent liabilities in the statements.

The Committee raised a number of questions on the draft statements and identified a number of proposed amendments.

Having regard to the work yet to be undertaken by the Audit Office and unresolved reporting matters the need for a special ARIC meeting was raised in order to review the finalised statements and endorse for signing by Council.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

ARIC28/21

That the information be noted in the Draft Financial Statements for period ending 30 June 2021 and requested a special ARIC meeting be convened to review and endorse the completed financial statements.

Moved Mr Barbeler

Seconded Mr Pearson

CARRIED

Jacqueline Sullivan, Management Accountant left the meeting at 12.40pm during discussion on Item 8.3.

Sharon Gourlay, Systems Accountant left the meeting at 12.45pm.

Adjournment of Meeting

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 12.45pm.

Resumption of Meeting

The meeting resumed at 1.00pm

8.1 CRJO PROPOSAL FOR SHARED INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE

Record No: I21/219

Responsible Officer:	Chief Strategy Officer
Author:	Chief Executive Officer
Key Theme:	4. Leadership Outcomes
CSP Community Strategy:	11.2 Council utilises sound fiscal management practices, pursues and attracts other sources of income
Delivery Program Objectives:	11.2.1 Council has best practice management for financial sustainability
Attachments:	1. CRJO Proposal - Internal Audit as a Shared Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The topic of utilising an internal audit shared service has been discussed previously, with general support subject to consideration of the detail.

The report provides the opportunity to consider the final CRJO Proposal and make a recommendation.

The following officer's recommendation is submitted for ARIC's consideration.

Discussion on CRJO Proposal for Shared Internal Audit Service:

The Committee considered the CRJO proposal and presentation by Kalina Koloff. A number of questions were raised including deliverables and total costs. In particular the number of audits to be undertaken per year, internal resources required and the specified cost factors excluded from the proposal. Consequently a comprehensive business case is required to support the recommendation.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

ARIC29/21

That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee recommends that

- A. Council continue to explore a shared internal audit service and related services with the CRJO and other opportunities to optimise Council's internal audit responsibilities.
- B. Continue with a dedicated Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee for SMRC.

Moved Mr Barbeler

Seconded Councillor Maslin

CARRIED

Item - 8.2. Interim Audit Management Letter - has been moved to another part of the document.

Item - 8.3. DRAFT Financial Statements for Period ending 30 June 2021 - has been moved to another part of the document.

Mr Bascomb declared a Conflict of Interest in Item 8.4 due to conducting some audits with Centium prior to his commencement at Snowy Monaro Regional Council.

8.4 INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES

Record No: I21/223

Responsible Officer:	Chief Strategy Officer
Key Theme:	4. Leadership Outcomes
CSP Community Strategy:	10.2 Sound governance practices direct Council business and decision making
Delivery Program Objectives:	10.2.1 Independent audit and risk framework drives accountability
Attachments:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Eol Evaluations2. Request Response Summary3. Centium Response4. Crowe Response5. Inconsult Response6. National Audits Response7. Oconor Marseden Response

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council received 5 expressions of interest (Eol) from organisations to provide internal audits. O'Connor Marsdens received a high score due to the low cost offered. This price varies markedly from the other providers, but the hourly rates are similar. This is a concern and indicates that either there will be considerably less time put into the audits or that the costs will blow out. Accordingly this Eol is not recommended.

Centium and National Audits Group score well. The Centium proposal is definitely the more polished approach. They show a good approach to an interative provision of internal audit services. National Audits Group has a track record of working with smaller regional councils that would have similar financial issues as faced by Snowy Monaro Regional Council. Centium would have access to a larger skill base and knowledge systems. National Audits Groups still contains a well experienced group, but more heavily focused on local government.

With the type of audits envisaged, which are very standard service provision areas, and taking into account the need to have audits undertaken that will lead to improvement plans that are achievable in the Council's current financial situation it is felt that National Audits Group is more likely to provide that desired outcome at a lower cost.

The following officer's recommendation is submitted for ARIC's consideration.

Discussion on Interim Internal Audit Services:

Centium and National Audits Group scored well and were the preferred organisations.

In Council's current financial situation, National Audits Group is more likely to provide that desired outcome at a lower cost.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION	ARIC30/21
That National Audits Group be engaged to provide interim internal audits as per the EOI list and commence as soon as possible.	
Moved Mr Barbeler	Seconded Councillor Maslin
	CARRIED

8.5 AUDIT ACTIONS PROGRESS

Record No: I21/197

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Chief Strategy Officer
Key Theme:	4. Leadership Outcomes
CSP Community Strategy:	10.2 Sound governance practices direct Council business and decision making
Delivery Program Objectives:	10.2.1 Independent audit and risk framework drives accountability
Attachments:	1. Actions Status at 21 September 2021
ARIC Charter Reference:	5.6.8; 5.6.10;

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report summarises the status of the recommendations from the various audits. The level of vacancies within the organisation means that there is limited capacity to develop improvement processes to support an increased focus on internal audit outcomes in the short term. The organisation faced high risks of reputational and other damage and this has led to a focus on service delivery for the community, including the commencement of a range of service reviews to look at changing how service are provided.

Over this period staff have also been focused on how to reduce the net costs of the organisation by several million dollars to stem the underlying unsustainable net cash outflow. The Council is in a very precarious financial position and the consequences of not dealing with that issue are very damaging.

Discussion on Audit Actions Progress:	
The Committee, having previously approved time extensions, reviewed the significant number of uncompleted internal audit actions and again emphasised the importance of follow up and regular ELT discussion on status.	
COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION	ARIC31/21
That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee:	
A. Receive and note the progress on the Audit Recommendations.	
B. Recommend that ELT regularly discuss the status of Audit Recommendations.	
Moved Mr Pearson	Seconded Councillor Maslin
	CARRIED

8.6 ARIC RESOLUTION UPDATES

Record No: I21/196

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Chief Strategy Officer
Key Theme:	4. Leadership Outcomes
CSP Community Strategy:	10.2 Sound governance practices direct Council business and decision making
Delivery Program Objectives:	10.2.1 Independent audit and risk framework drives accountability
Attachments:	1. Outstanding Resolution Actions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Attached is a report in the outstanding recommendations and notes as to their current status.

The following officer's recommendation is submitted for ARIC's consideration.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

ARIC32/21

That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee note the information in the ARIC Resolution Updates and review the Audit Program in March 2022.

Moved Mr Barbeler

Seconded Mr Pearson

CARRIED

8.7 MONTHLY FUNDS MANAGEMENT REPORT - AUGUST 2021

Record No: I21/194

Responsible Officer:	Chief Strategy Officer
Author:	Finance Officer
Key Direction:	7. Providing Effective Civic Leadership and Citizen Participation
Delivery Plan Strategy:	DP7.6 Increase and improve Council's financial sustainability.
Operational Plan Action:	OP7.18 Effective management of Council funds to ensure financial sustainability.
Attachments:	Nil
Cost Centre	Financial Services
Project	Funds Management
Further Operational Plan Actions:	OP7.2 Completion of reporting requirements in accordance with legislation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following report details the funds management position for the reporting period ending 31 August 2021.

Cash and Investments are \$87,517,395.

Certification

I, David Rawlings, Responsible Accounting Officer of Snowy Monaro Regional Council hereby certify, as required by Clause 212 of the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005, that investments as detailed in this report have been invested in accordance with Section 625 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, the Regulations and Council’s Investment Policy.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION	ARIC33/21
That the Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee:	
A. Receive the report indicating Council’s cash and investments position as at 31 August 2021.	
B. Receive the Certificate of the Responsible Accounting Officer.	
Moved Mr Barbeler	Seconded Mr Pearson
CARRIED	

8.8 CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

Record No: I21/198

Responsible Officer:	Chief Executive Officer
Author:	Chief Strategy Officer
Key Theme:	4. Leadership Outcomes
CSP Community Strategy:	10.2 Sound governance practices direct Council business and decision making
Delivery Program Objectives:	10.2.1 Independent audit and risk framework drives accountability
Attachments:	Nil
ARIC Charter Reference:	5.2.8; 5.3.6; 5.6.1; 5.7.1; 5.8.4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council’s Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee (ARIC), at its meeting on 5 December 2018, requested (Resolution No. ARIC97/18) *that a verbal report by the General Manager regarding Council plans and direction be included in all meetings as a standard agenda item.*

The following officer’s recommendation is submitted for ARIC’s consideration.

<p>The following topics were discussed by the CEO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing the culture of the organisation – in-house training on Workplace Behaviour. • Managing Covid – working from home, essential services and requirement for Aged Care workforce to be vaccinated. • Financial Statements – improvement on deficit forecasting and Emergency Recovery Plan.

- New Chief Financial Officer.
- Special Rate Variation.
- ARIC member vacancy.
- Council elections on 4 December 2021 – first Council meeting early January 2022.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

ARIC34/21

That Council's Audit, Risk and Improvement Committee receive and note the information provided by the Chief Executive Officer.

Moved Mr Barbeler

Seconded Mr Pearson

CARRIED

9. GENERAL BUSINESS

9.1 FUTURE ARIC MEETINGS

The Committee members requested:

- A. A meeting to discuss the Final Interim Management Letter and Financial Statements. Proposed date is 18 October 2021 - to be confirmed.
- B. Meetings in December 2021, March 2022 and June 2022 – dates to be confirmed and calendar invites to be sent out.

9.2 PRESENTATIONS - WHS AND WORKFORCE/ABEF PLAN INTO ACTION

Mr Pearson passed on his gratitude to the Chief Workforce Officer for being on standby for the WHS and Workforce/ABEF Plan into Action Presentations. Due to time constraints, the presentations are deferred and will be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

Mr Pearson thanked the Committee for the opportunity to Chair the meeting.

10. NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 11 November 2021 commencing at 4.00pm.

There being no further business the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.00pm.

CHAIRPERSON

The above minutes of the Audit Risk And Improvement Committee Meeting of Snowy Monaro Regional Council held on 27 September 2021 were confirmed by Committee at a duly convened meeting on 11 November 2021 at which meeting the signature hereon was subscribed.