

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Public Protection Committee
DATE	28 th June 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Implementation of the approved recommendations of the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) assessment of the Aberdeen Scientific Services Laboratory (ASSL).
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/140
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Mark Reilly
REPORT AUTHOR	Laura Cruickshank
TERMS OF REFERENCE	3.1 and 3.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Committee on the status of United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accreditation and the progress of recommendations of assessment of the Aberdeen Scientific Services Laboratory (ASSL).

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Committee: -

- 2.1 notes the work being undertaken to implement and develop the recommendations of the 2022 UKAS re-assessment report, following a remote assessment carried out between 16 and 30 March 2022.
- 2.2 endorses the continuation of accreditation as a license to operate.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 ASSL provides analytical and scientific services to a wide range of local authority and private clients. It provides statutory functions under food and agriculture legislation. When at full complement, it is a team of 20 staff within Operations and Protective Services, consisting of 18 scientific and technical staff and 2 support staff. Among the staff are individuals who have the appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out the statutory functions of Public Analyst, Food Examiner and Agricultural Analyst which they do on behalf of Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and The Moray Council. The Feed (Transfer of Functions) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 Act transferred competence for feed law functions from local

authorities to Food Standards Scotland (FSS) resulting in one member of staff being appointed as the Agricultural Analyst for FSS and one as Deputy Agricultural Analyst. Public Analyst and Agricultural Analyst appointments are also held for The City of York Council.

- 3.2 ASSL provides both chemical analysis and microbiological examination on a range of sample types, principally food, animal feeds, potable water, swimming pools, legionella monitoring, air monitoring and surface/ground waters and leachates from landfill site monitoring. It provides support for the Environmental Health services and plays an integral part in the process of protecting the health of the people of the North East of Scotland.
- 3.3 ASSL is an Official Feed and Food laboratory (OCL) jointly designated for Great Britain by FSS and the Food Standards Agency (FSA) under the Official Feed and Food Control Regulation (2017/625). Without this status, the laboratory would not be able to undertake any enforcement work and UKAS accreditation is a prerequisite for this.
- 3.4 ASSL has successfully maintained UKAS accreditation status since 1994. Between 16 and 30 March 2022, the laboratory received an annual Surveillance assessment audit by UKAS. Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, both aspects of the assessment were carried out remotely.

The Surveillance audit was the third assessment of the current 4-year accreditation cycle for the laboratory (2020 to 2023). The 2020 and 2021 Surveillance audit assessments were successfully completed via remote assessment, with the current cycle due to end with a Re-assessment audit in 2023.

During the 2022 assessment, a small number of findings were raised that identified areas where further work was required. These findings were addressed, and further evidence submitted to demonstrate this on 23 May 2022. The recommendation of the assessment audit was that ASSL retained its ISO17025:2017 accreditation. However, this has since been voluntarily suspended for a 3-month period as a consequence of the laboratory's permanent relocation to the James Hutton Institute in May 2022. This relocation has seen the laboratories move to bespoke facilities, within the building of a renowned scientific research institute, designed to improve resilience and enhanced service provision. It is hoped that this will also provide opportunities for income generating joint working between the organisations. It is anticipated that UKAS reaccreditation will be completed for all microbiological and water methods by July 2022, and for all food and feed chemistry methods by October 2022.

- 3.5 UKAS assessments (whether Re-assessment or Surveillance) are all encompassing audits of ASSL's operating and technical practices. Work undertaken by the Laboratory, including the implementation of the Quality

Management System, are assessed against the ISO standard criteria, Food Standards Scotland and Drinking Water Inspectorate guidelines.

- 3.6 As legislative and technical amendments are made accreditation requirements adapt to reflect and accommodate best practice. As such, the UKAS technical assessors make annual reports on surveillance visits of ASSL. The findings of the 2022 re-assessment are attached in Appendix A for reference.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The estimate of total expenditure required by UKAS to maintain the accreditation cycle is approximately £45,000 over the 4 years.
- 4.2 The estimate of the total expenditure, including laboratory staff time, required by the Council to allow ASSL to maintain accreditation and implement recommendations over the same period is approximately £80,000.
- 4.3 All costs of maintaining accreditation are built into existing budgets.
- 4.4 The expenditure is required as the maintenance of UKAS accreditation, including to the Drinking Water Testing Specification (DWTS), forms part of existing service level agreements with local authority partners, Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Moray Council. Local authority income currently forms approximately 85% of the £1.2 million turnover of the laboratory. This allows ASSL to function as a cost neutral entity.
- 4.5 UKAS accreditation is also required by most private customers seeking analytical services.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	None identified		
Compliance	Failure to maintain UKAS accreditation would result in ASSL being unable to provide its Official Control Laboratory, Drinking Water	M	Continue to invest the necessary time and resources required to maintain UKAS accreditation.

	Testing Specification (DWTS), and other functions, in ensuring that submitted samples comply with current legislation		
Operational	More than 95% of the work carried out by ASSL relies on the laboratory holding UKAS accreditation, loss of accreditation would result in the service being unable to operate.	M	Continue to invest the necessary time and resources required to maintain UKAS accreditation.
Financial	Loss of significant part of local authority client base due to failure to maintain UKAS accreditation, as required by existing service level agreements.	M	Continue to invest the necessary time and resources required to maintain UKAS accreditation.
Reputational	Loss of credibility of ASSL, with clients and other organisations, in ability to provide quality services through failure to maintain UKAS accreditation.	M	Continue to invest the n necessary time and resources required to maintain UKAS accreditation
Environment / Climate	None identified		

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The activity outlined in this report supports the ACC Policy Statement through protection of public health, provision of advice and support to local authorities and businesses.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	ASSL supports the Prosperous Economy element of the LOIP through the provision of a locally based UKAS accredited laboratory service which can be accessed by local businesses, both new and established.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	By providing local businesses with access to an accredited laboratory, as well as sound advice, an opinion on the significance of results they are more likely to succeed and contribute to the local economy.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	
Regional and City Strategies	None identified
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	None identified

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Not required.
Privacy Impact Assessment	Not required.
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Not required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A : United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) Assessment Report detailing the visit made to Aberdeen Scientific Services Laboratory between the 16th and 30th March 2022.

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