

MINUTES of the meeting of the **AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** held at 10.30 am on 1 October 2020 at Remote.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its next meeting.

Elected Members:

*= in attendance

Mr David Harmer (Chairman)*
Mr Keith Witham (Vice-Chairman)*
Mr Edward Hawkins*
Dr Peter Szanto*
Mr Stephen Spence*
Stephen Cooksey*

33/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Stephen Cooksey.

34/19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 28 AUGUST 2020 [Item 2]

The Chairman highlighted an attendance error on front page of minutes. The minutes should state that only Stephen Cooksey was not present.

Subject to the above amendment, the Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

35/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

36/19 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

There were none.

37/19 RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER [Item 5]

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Members noted that the items within A21/20 and A22/20 were on the meeting's agenda and therefore the actions had been marked as complete.

Action/Further information to note:

None.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report.

38/19 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20 [Item 6]

Witnesses:

Ciaran McLaughlin, Grant Thornton

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The representative from Grant Thornton introduced the item and provided Members with a summary of the detail found within each page of the report. The detail presented could be found from page 17 of the public agenda.
2. In regards to the Children's Service being identified as a signification risk for the Value For Money (VFM) arrangements, Members asked whether the risk was likely to be present for some time due to COVID-19 preventing Ofsted from completing any inspections. The representative confirmed that Ofsted were now beginning to undertake inspections again.
3. Members asked for clarification that, other than the VFM risks and ongoing work related to the EcoPark, the Audit work was going well and as expected. Grant Thornton confirmed that this was the case and that there had been a number of adjustments throughout the Audit however there was nothing that particularly needed Members' attention.
4. Members highlighted the list of outstanding items on page 6 and asked when Grant Thornton expected the list to be complete. Grant Thornton stated that they expected the outstanding items to be completed by the end of the following week.
5. The Committee agreed amended recommendations which are recorded below.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Committee:

1. Noted the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts, as attached in Annex A
2. Considered the contents of the draft 2019/20 Audit Findings Report in Annex B;
3. Agreed the officer response to recommendations of the external auditor;
4. Noted the Executive Director of Resources' letter of representation, which is attached in Annex C;
5. Determined that no issues in the Audit Findings Report should be referred to the Cabinet.

39/19 ANNUAL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE REPORT [Item 7]**Witnesses:**

Sarah Bogunovic, Customer Relations and Service Improvement Manager

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Customer Relations and Service Improvement Manager introduced the item and highlighted that the report provided an overview of the council's complaint handling performance in 2019/20 and that it intended to demonstrate how feedback from customers had been used to improve services. Members noted a summary of the key points of the report which included detail outlined from page 43 of the public agenda.
2. Members thanked officers for providing a clear and detailed report.
3. Members stated that it would be helpful to be provided with a summary document which included the key points which would be more suitable for public consumption. Officers stated that the service was looking into ways to become more transparent and that they would take Members' comments into consideration. It was highlighted that some of the report's detail was available on the public website.
4. The Committee stated that it was clear the council was learning from the complaints received which was positive.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the report.

40/19 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT – QUARTER 1 (01/04/20 – 30/06/20) [Item 8]

Witnesses:

David John, Audit Manager

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Audit Manager introduced the report and provided Members with a brief summary. Members noted that during the pandemic the service had suspended its planned work and focused on supporting the council where it needed it most. Further detail on how the service support the council could be found within section 2 of the report. Section 1 of the report provided a summary of the audits which had been completed from the end of quarter 4. Members further noted that the only audit without reasonable assurance was the Local Economic Partnerships audit.
2. A Member of the Committee stated that they felt the word 'crisis' was not appropriate when discussion the council's reaction to the pandemic as it was an opportunity to learn new things. The Member went on to say that the word 'situation' better reflected the events.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the report.

41/19 RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE [Item 9]

Stephen Spence left the meeting at 11:30am.

Witnesses:

Anna D'Alessandro, Director - Corporate Finance

Ross Tudor, EY

Emma Price, EY

Mary Buxton, EY

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers introduced the report and noted that its purpose was to introduce the council's strategic risk partner, EY, and provide an overview of their project approach in order to enable the committee to meet its responsibilities for monitoring the development and operation of the council's risk management arrangements.
2. Representatives from EY presented the information found within the slides attached to the main report. The detail could be found from page 95 of the public agenda.
3. Following the presentation, Members further noted that EY's intention was to ensure the council had the tools and knowledge to have effective risk management.
4. Members highlighted the importance of accessing risk within each level of the organisation. Officers agreed with this approach and confirmed that initial interviews would be held with senior levels of the council.
5. Members discussed the highest risks caused by increased working from home. It was noted that a principal risk was around cyber security.
6. The Committee noted a timeline of the programme which could be found on page 101 of the agenda.
7. Officers noted that a further update on the council's risk culture would be provided at the next meeting which would reference the setting of the risk register.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the report.

42/19 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC [Item 10]

The Chairman moved under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, that the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 and Part 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

43/19 PENSIONS ADMINISTRATION TURNAROUND PROGRAMME [Item 11]**Witnesses:**

Sonia Sharma, Ext Commercial Advisor
Anna D'Alessandro, Director - Corporate Finance

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The report was introduced by officers. The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the officers present before moving to recommendations.

Actions/ further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the report.

44/19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 12]

The date of the meeting was noted as 16 October 2020.

Meeting ended at: 12.20 pm

Chairman