



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 22nd MARCH 2022

PRESENT: Councillor T Clements (Chair), Councillors R Ford (Vice-Chair), M Cook, M J Greatorex, Dr S Peale and P Thurgood

Officers Lynne Pugh (Assistant Director Finance), Andrew Wood (Audit Manager) and Jo Hutchison (Democratic Services, Scrutiny and Elections Officer)

Visitors Laurelin Griffiths (Grant Thornton) and Mark Stocks (Grant Thornton)

54 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th February 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor Dr S Peale and seconded by Councillor P Thurgood)

55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andrew Cooper.

The Chair welcomed Councillor M Cook as a new member of the Committee.

56 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of Interest.

57 AUDITORS' ANNUAL REPORT

Mr Mark Stocks from Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, summarised the report.

The Committee sought clarification and commented on the following areas:

1. What work was underway to address those service plans which had not been fully maintained and kept up to date, and whether there was any correlation between those service areas where plans were not up to date

and either areas where internal audit recommendations remained outstanding or where there were areas high spend in the local authority compared to other similar authorities. It was reported that there was a process underway to review service plans and, whilst there was not a correlation with outstanding internal audit recommendations, there was some correlation between some areas of high spend and areas without up to date service plans.

2. How the Council's procurement processes differed from other councils', where it was reported that the council had significant capital projects underway and needed to ensure that the monitoring of contracts / suppliers was adequate.

RESOLVED That the Committee:

Endorsed the report with the comments made.

(Moved by Councillor Michelle Cook and seconded by Councillor Dr S Peuple)

58 INFORMING THE AUDIT RISK ASSESSMENT

Ms Laurelin Griffiths of Grant Thornton presented the report.

RESOLVED That the Committee:

Endorsed the report of the External Auditors informing the Risk assessment for 2021/22 for the Council

(Moved by Councillor Moira Greatorex and seconded by Councillor Michelle Cook)

59 FINAL ACCOUNTS PLAN 2021/22 - ACCOUNTING POLICIES AND ACTION PLAN

The report of the Executive Director, Finance, presented by the Assistant Director, Finance advised Members of the proposed Accounting Policies for 2021/22, and provided an outline of the corporate requirements that will need to be achieved in order to produce the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts for 2021/22.

RESOLVED That:

1. the proposed Accounting Policies for 2021/22, attached as Appendix A be approved;

2. the target of 30th June 2022 for closure of the final accounts and production of the statement for 2021/22 be approved;
3. staffing resources be committed to the provision of appropriate information and support in order to meet the published timescales and the Committee receive progress updates (if required);
4. CMT receive a fortnightly update until completion of the audit; and
5. the Statement be presented to the Audit & Governance Committee before the end of September 2022.

(Moved by Councillor Richard Ford and seconded by Councillor Dr Simon Peuple)

60 RESET & RECOVERY UPDATE

The Assistant Director, Finance provided an update to the Committee on the Recovery & Reset programme and in particular the risk management and quality assurance processes in place.

In the absence of the Recovery & Reset Programme Director, it was agreed that a more detailed written update would be circulated to members, particularly in terms of the budget impacts and the importance of ensuring that the savings envisaged by the project would be delivered in years 2 and 3.

61 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN AND CHARTER 2022/2023

The Audit Manager presented the Internal Audit Plan and Charter 2022/2023.

RESOLVED That:

1. Members commented on and endorsed the 2022/23 proposed internal audit plan (Appendix 1) and charter (Appendix 2) and
2. A review be undertaken and reported back to the Committee on the number of days allocated to monitoring capital programmes.

(Moved by Councillor Dr Simon Peuple and seconded by Councillor Peter Thurgood)

Councillor T Clements left the meeting at 7.12pm and the Vice-Chair, Councillor R Ford chaired the remainder of the meeting.

62 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - NEXT STEPS

The Audit Manager provided an update to the Committee in relation to the potential appointment of an Independent Member(s) to Committee.

The Committee commented on and sought clarifications in the following areas:

1. A request had been made to consider whether it was possible to reduce the period within which a candidate had been a Councillor or Officer from 5 years. The Monitoring Officer had advised on this and it was considered most appropriate to remain at 5 years. It was agreed that the Monitoring Officer's advice would be shared with the Committee.
2. Whether there could be a requirement on any applicants to disclose any relationships / affiliations with members / officers / groups and the nature of that relationship which would enable an informed decision to be taken of any recruitment, as opposed to any affiliation or relationship being an automatic bar to being an applicant.
3. Whether it would be appropriate for councillors (members of the Audit & Governance Committee) to be members of any interview panel or not.
4. The duration of the position, and whether a longer term than 3 years were possible.

RESOLVED That the Committee:

Considered and, subject to confirmation of the matters commented on in the meeting, the Committee ratified the approach to be taken in respect of appointing an Independent Member to the Committee.

(Moved by Councillor Richard Ford and seconded by Councillor Dr Simon Peuple)

Councillor Michelle Cook left the meeting at 7.52pm.

63 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 2021/22

The report of the Audit Manager presented the proposed Annual Report of the Audit & Governance Committee 2021/22.

RESOLVED That the Committee:

the proposed Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2021/22 be endorsed and presented to Council.

(Moved by Councillor Richard Ford and seconded by Councillor Moira Greatorex)

The Committee thanked the Audit Manager for his work during the year.

64 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TIMETABLE

The Committee reviewed the Timetable, and agreed to include an additional item to provide an Independent Member update be added to the Timetable for the June meeting, and agreed to explore whether the item on the Timetable for June regarding an updated Code of Conduct could be deferred to a later meeting.

65 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That Members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that the business involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

(Moved by Councillor Richard Ford and seconded by Councillor Peter Thurgood)

66 UPDATE FROM THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

The Committee was updated by Councillors Ford and People, who were both members of the Audit & Governance sub-committee, on the discussions at its meeting on 27th January 2022, and the recommendations it had made to this Committee.

It was agreed that Councillor T Clements should become a member of the sub-committee as Councillor M Summers was no longer a member.

Following consideration of the recommendations which the Sub-Committee had made to this Committee, and the further update from members of the Sub-Committee following a visit to key sites associated with the project, the Committee:

RESOLVED: That it recommend to Cabinet that:

1. no decision to bridge the gap in college funding be taken without being considered at full Council
2. Cabinet to ensure adequate support for strategic management of the project at all stages was available; and
3. Over reliance on individual staff was a risk that needed to be managed going forward and recorded in the risk register.

The Committee thanked the Assistant Director, Finance for her support to the Committee and wished her the best for the future.

Chair

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