



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 24th APRIL 2024

PRESENT: Councillors B Clarke, S Daniels, S Doyle, B Price (Vice-Chair)
and R Pritchard

Officers Rebecca Smeathers (Executive Director Finance (S151)), Joanne Goodfellow (Assistant Director Finance), Andrew Wood (Audit Manager), Tracey Poynton (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager) and Laura Sandland (Democratic and Executive Support Officer)

Visitors Laurelin Griffiths – Grant Thornton, former External Auditors
Laura Hinsley – Azets, current External Auditors

65 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Maycock & P Thurgood
Councillor B Price (Vice Chair) chaired the meeting in the Chairs absence.

66 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2024 were approved and signed as a correct record.

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor B Clarke)

67 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of Interest.

68 REVIEW OF THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT, MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STATEMENT 2024/25 AND THE TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2023/24

Report of the Executive Director, Finance, reviewed the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and Annual Investment Statement 2024/25 and the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-year Review Report 2023/24 approved by Council on 27th February 2024 and 12th December 2023 respectively.

Resolved that the Committee

1. Considered the Treasury Management Reports, as detailed within the reports attached at Appendix A and Appendix B and highlighted any changes for recommendation to Cabinet.

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded by Councillor R Pritchard)

69 2022/23 RE-STATED STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Report of the Executive Director, Finance, to seek approval for the re-stated Statement of Accounts (the Statement) for the financial year ended 31st March 2023 following completion of the external audit, and updates required to take account of IFRIC 14 - IAS 19 The Limit on a Defined Benefit Asset.

The Executive Director - Finance updated the committee on the Re-stated Statement of Accounts. The draft was approved at the committee in September 2023 and delegated authority was given to the chair to sign off. However, due to the time scale of receiving the final audit of the pension fund and guidance from CIPFA about the treatment of some of the pension asset valuations in the accounts, these material changes have been bought back to be signed off by the committee.

The external Auditor Laurelin Griffiths went through the Audit Findings Report to give the information to the committee on the audit findings before they agreed to sign off the 2022/23 Re-stated Statement of Accounts. The vast majority of the Audit findings report is identical to the report presented in September 2023, there are a few outstanding queries which was updated.

- Testing of journals are now completed with no issues.
- Testing on valuation of properties now completed, on the Dwellings, the Investment Properties and other land and buildings with no additional issues other than the small ones reported in September.
- Received assurances from the external auditor of the Staffordshire pension fund with no issues.
- One change is the pension net asset is now being presented as a net liability due to the application of the net asset saving under IFRIC 14 that has resulted in just under a seven million pound swing in that pension figure but this doesn't affect the surplus and deficit on Provision of services and it doesn't affect the council's general fund, it's in effect just a technical accounting adjustment.

- To confirm financial update of adjustment for an additional £7,500 for the work on the pension adjustment bringing the total audit for the year to £89,476

Following an update from the Audit Findings Report it was

Resolved that the committee

1. Approved the Annual Statement of Accounts 2022/23

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor B Clarke)

70 AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

Report of Grant Thornton. Laurelin Griffiths from Grant Thornton, external auditors, summarised the Annual Report.

The Annual Report on the council's arrangements to secure Value for money 2022/23 financial year. Report on 3 areas

- Council's arrangements to secure financial sustainability.
- The council's governance arrangements
- The council's arrangements to secure improvements in economy efficiency and effectiveness.

This is a relatively positive report with some minor improvements, there were no significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements.

Resolved that the Committee:

1. Endorsed the report with the comments made.

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded by Councillor R Pritchard)

71 AUDIT INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

Report of External Auditors, Azets, provided the Audit & Governance Committee with a report on progress in delivering our responsibilities as your external auditors.

Interim audit in March 2023, the response times from management have been excellent and we have had all the information we had requested. Identified one recommendation in relation to Parks and Open Spaces, these weren't separately identified in the fixed assets register. Comfortable it's not a material balance, and will liaise with the Grant Thornton Team to get access to their files and will give us assurance over the opening balances.

On track for signing the Audit Opinion in September.

Resolved that the Committee:

1. Considered progress stated in the report.

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded By Councillor S Daniels)

72 ANNUAL REVIEW OF FINANCIAL GUIDANCE

Report of the Assistant Director, Finance, sought endorsement of the proposed amendments to Financial Guidance.

Resolved that the committee:

1. Endorsed the proposed amendments to the Council's Financial Guidance, to take immediate effect.

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded by Councillor R Pritchard)

73 PUBLIC SECTOR INTERNAL AUDIT STANDARDS/QUALITY ASSURANCE & IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Report of the Audit Manager, reported to the Audit & Governance Committee on Internal Audit's compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP).

Resolved that the Committee endorsed:

1. Internal Audit's assessment of compliance with the PSIAS (Appendix 1);
2. The QAIP (Appendix 2); and
3. The External Quality Assessment Action Plan (Appendix 3).

(Moved by Councillor R Pritchard and seconded by Councillor B Clarke)

74 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Report of the Audit Manager presented the proposed Annual Report of the Audit & Governance Committee for 2023/24 for Council.

Resolved that the Committee:

1. Endorsed the proposed Annual Report of the Audit &

Governance Committee 2023/24.

(Moved by Councillor B Clarke and seconded by Councillor S Doyle)

Councillor B Clarke thanked the Officers for support in the past year.

75 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE TIMETABLE

The new timetable will be reviewed at the first meeting in the new municipal year

Chair