

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

HELD: 26 JUNE 2014

Start: 7.00pm

Finish: 8.05pm

PRESENT:

Councillor E Pope (Chairman)
D Whittington (Vice Chairman)

Councillors C Dereli G Jones
Y Gagen R A Pendleton
P Greenall N Pryce-Roberts
J Hodson L Savage
D Westley

Officers Borough Treasurer (Mr M Taylor)
Borough Solicitor (Mr T Broderick)
Audit Manager (Mr M Coysh)
Assistant Member Services Manager (Mrs J Denning)

Also in attendance: Ms K Murray, Engagement Lead, Grant Thornton (External Audit)
Mr G Small, Engagement Manager, Grant Thornton (External Audit)

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Owens.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, the Committee noted the termination of membership of Councillor G Hodson and the appointment of Councillor J Hodson for this meeting only, giving effect to the wishes of the Political Groups.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 25 March 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. GRANT THORNTON FINANCIAL RESILIENCE REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer, as contained on pages 7 to 20 of the Book of Reports, which detailed the External Auditor's finding from their review of the Council's arrangements for securing financial resilience.

RESOLVED That the report be noted.

6. GRANT THORNTON AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer, as contained on pages 21 to 38 of the Book of Reports, which provided an update from the External Auditors on progress in delivering against their audit plan; a summary of emerging national issues and development; and a number of challenge questions for the Committee to consider.

A 'Guide to Local Authority Accounts', produced by Grant Thornton, was circulated.

RESOLVED That the report be noted and a copy of the Grant Thornton 'Guide to Local Authority Accounts' as circulated at the meeting be provided to all Members.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer, as contained on pages 39 to 48 of the Book of Reports, which presented the 2013-14 Internal Audit Annual Report.

Comments and questions were raised in respect of the following:

- 84% of agreed recommendations implemented on time by Managers
- Data Protection – incoming data
- Council Tax – Single persons discount – County wide review
- Accuracy of Benefits Claims and Benefits enquiries
- Impact of Welfare Reform on Revenues & Benefits – Future Briefing for Members
- Figures claiming Single Persons Discount – Significant
- Reconciliations – improvements made

RESOLVED That the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2013-14 be noted.

(Note: Councillors J Hodson and Savage arrived during consideration of this item.)

8. INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITIES - QUARTERLY UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer, as contained on pages 49 to 52 of the Book of Reports, which advised of progress against the 2014/15 Internal Audit Plan.

RESOLVED That the progress in the year to date be noted.

9. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2013/2014

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer, as contained on pages 53 to 62 of the Book of Reports, which presented the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2013/14.

Comments and questions were raised in respect of the following:

- Sickness Monitoring and welfare – Quarterly reports submitted to Cabinet and Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- Vehicle Maintenance Contractor certification process and improved record keeping and monitoring.

RESOLVED That the Annual Governance Statement 2013/2014 be approved and commended to the Leader and Managing Directors for signature.

10. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer, as contained on pages 63 to 64 of the Book of Reports, which provided details on the preparation of the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014.

The Borough Treasurer advised that in line with requirements the Statement of Accounts would be sent to all Members and would be available on the Council's website.

RESOLVED A. That the report be noted.

- B. That a further report to approve the audited statement of accounts be produced for the next meeting of the Committee.

11. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Treasurer, as contained on pages 65 to 94 of the Book of Reports, on the revision and updating of the Council's Financial Regulations within the Constitution.

RESOLVED That the updated set of Financial Regulations attached at Appendix 1 of the report be endorsed and the document reissued to all staff.

12. OFFICER CODE OF CONDUCT

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Borough Treasurer and Borough Solicitor, as contained on pages 95 to 118 of the Book of Reports, which set out a number of proposed revisions to the Council's Officer Code of conduct within the Constitution.

Comments and questions were raised in respect of the following:

- Training for staff on the Code of Conduct and Equalities – Future Briefing Note
- Disclosure of interests for staff
- Member and Officer Relationships in Planning Protocol

- RESOLVED A. That the revisions to the Officer Code of Conduct, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be endorsed and the updated document circulated to staff.
- B. That the Transformation Manager be asked to prepare a Briefing Note to identify what training is provided to staff on the Code and also on issues such as equality.

13. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT QUARTERLY MONITORING OF USE OF POWERS

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Solicitor, as contained on pages 119 to 122 of the Book of Reports, in relation to the quarterly monitoring of activity under the Regulatory of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), which reported that there was no relevant activity to bring to the attention on the Committee.

RESOLVED That the update be noted.

14. WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Committee's programme of work as set down at page 123 of the Book of Reports.

- RESOLVED That the Work Programme be approved and future training be held on the following topics:
- Housing Asset Management
 - Data Protection
 - Universal Credit – Revenues and Benefits

THE CHAIRMAN