

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

HELD: Tuesday, 30 May 2023

Start: 7.00 pm

Finish: 7.26 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor: M Anderson (Chair)

Councillors: M Parlour
J Gordon
E Pope

D Daniels
S Patel

In attendance: Georgia Jones, Director, Grant Thornton
Ben Stern, Grant Thornton (Observer)

Officers: Tony Furber, Corporate Finance Manager (Deputy S151 Officer)
Catherine Kirwan, Procurement Manager
Jennifer Lunn, Assistant Solicitor
Jacqueline Pendleton, Corporate Compliance & Governance
Manager
James Pierce, Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial
Services Section 151 Officer
Stephanie Salmon, Procurement Officer
Duncan Jowitt, Democratic Services Officer
Chloe McNally, Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies received.

2 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, the Committee noted the termination of Councillor Whittington, and the appointment of Councillor Gordon for this meeting only, thereby giving effect to the wishes of the Political Groups.

3 URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2023 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no items under this heading.

7 GRANT THORNTON - AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to the Audit Progress Report and Sector Update year ending 31 March 2023 from our External Auditors Grant Thornton, which provided a summary of emerging national issues and relevant issues that the committee might wish to consider.

The Chairman welcomed and invited Georgia Jones, Director, Grant Thornton, to present the report to the Committee.

Georgia Jones confirmed that Grant Thornton are hopeful to be in a position to sign off the 20/21 accounts in July 23. Also, that no additional significant issues had been raised in the course of their recent work beyond those raised in the Interim Findings Report.

Councillors raised questions about the interim audit findings, the possibility of taking a report to Full Council and the Derby Street improvements.

Georgia Jones said that after all the work was completed, an interim report would be taken to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee considered the Audit Progress Report as contained on pages 543-560 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members for approval.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

8 INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER 2023/24

The Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources submitted a report advising Members of the outcome of the external assessment of internal audit's conformance to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (the review).

The Chairman invited the Internal Audit Manager to present the report.

The Committee considered the Internal Audit Charter 2023/24 Report as contained on pages 561-581 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members for approval.

RESOLVED: That officers be thanked for their work and the contents of the Internal Audit Charter 2023/24 at Appendix 1 of the report, be noted and approved to take effect from 31 May 2023.

9 EXTERNAL REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT

The Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources submitted a report advising Members of the outcome of the external assessment of internal audit's

conformance to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (the review).

The Chairman invited the Internal Audit Manager to present the report.

The Internal Audit Manager said that overall, the review had been a glowing report with just some minor advisories which were already being dealt with.

The Committee considered the External Review of Internal Audit Report as contained on pages 583-603 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members for approval.

RESOLVED: That Members note the review's overall conclusion that West Lancashire Borough Council's Internal Audit Service generally conforms to the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and those of the Local Government Application Note.

10 **INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY AND ANNUAL PLAN 2023/24**

The Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources submitted a report to provide Members with the background to the preparation of the 2023/24 Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan and present it for approval.

The Chairman invited the Internal Audit Manager to present the report. She explained that the team was recruiting a temporary auditor as they were one auditor down and would review it at the next available meeting.

The Committee considered the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan 2023/23 as contained on pages 605-615 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members for approval.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Strategy and Annual Plan 2023/24 at Appendix 1 of the report be approved to take effect from 1 April 2023.

11 **INTERNAL AUDIT ACTIVITIES - PROGRESS REPORT**

The Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources submitted a report to advise Members of progress against the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan.

The Chairman invited the Corporate Compliance & Governance Manager to present the report. She explained that the work was now 98% completed and that weekly reports in relation to the implementation of audit recommendations were being submitted to the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources.

The Committee considered the progress against the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan as contained on pages 617-628 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members.

RESOLVED: That Members note the progress in the year to date.

12 PROCUREMENT POLICY

The Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Property submitted a report asking Members to consider the proposed Procurement Policy.

The Chairman invited the Procurement Manager to present the report.

Members asked about who monitored the service and what penalties were built into tenders and contracts. The Procurement Manager explained that the Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Property was now her direct line manager and that they worked closely with Legal Services to build in robust rectification processes. Any exemptions had to be signed off by the Chief Operating Officer, who had the final say.

The Committee considered the Procurement Policy as contained on pages 629-645 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommend the Procurement Policy to Council to be noted and approved.

13 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT - ANNUAL SETTING OF THE POLICY

The Legal and Democratic Services Manager submitted a report on the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Power's Act (RIPA) and to present the RIPA Policy document for approval.

The Committee considered the RIPA Activity and RIPA Policy as contained on pages 647-675 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members.

RESOLVED: That the Council's RIPA activity and the RIPA Policy at Appendix 1, be noted.

14 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the Committee's 2023/24 Work Programme as set out on page 677 of the Book of Reports.

Members asked about a possible joint presentation on the final accounts and the Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Services said that he would take this up but had been struggling to find a suitable date. Members suggested a presentation to all councillors might be valuable as training.

RESOLVED: That the Work Programme be noted.

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Chairman