

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

HELD: Wednesday, 26 July 2023

Start: 7.03 pm

Finish: 7.59 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor: M Anderson (Chairman)

Councillors: M Parlour
J Fillis
S Patel
D West
D Daniels
Marsh-Pritchard
E Pope
D Whittington

In attendance: Councillor Paul Hogan
Councillor David Westley

Officers: 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
Duncan Jowitt, Democratic Services Officer

15 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies received.

16 **MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**

There were no changes to the membership of the Committee.

17 **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business.

18 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

19 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on the 30 May 2023, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

20 **PUBLIC SPEAKING**

There were no items under this heading.

21 GRANT THORNTON PROGRESS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the Audit Findings Report 2020-21 and Auditor's Annual Report 2020-21.

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

She confirmed that there were no significant changes overall and that the risks identified were not unusual. She described in detail their key findings, judgments and estimates, the matters they had discussed with corporate management team, the council's value for money arrangements and other responsibilities under the code.

Councillors raised question in respect of the pension fund, in particular the misstatement relating to the payment in advance of employer contributions in respect of the pension fund for 2021/22 and 2022/23, and about Value for Money (VFM) arrangements.

Georgia Jones confirmed that now that the amendments had been made, she was satisfied that the council was compliant with guidance and that there were no further issues. She confirmed that VFM had been looked at in detail and, following the agreement of fees and any appropriate liaison, the final costing would be brought back to the Committee and the accounts would go to council for approval. James Pierce cited the turnover of finance staff as the cause of delay and said he was looking into the recruitment of senior staff in Finance and was not anticipating any major impact on the MTFs.

RESOLVED: That the reports as set out on pages 13-108 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members for approval be noted and the issue of the Letter of Representation 2020-21 be recommended.

22 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources submitted a report presenting the 2022/23 Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion for the consideration of Members.

The Chairman invited the Corporate Compliance and Governance Manager to present the report.

The Committee considered the 2022/23 Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion as contained on pages 109 to 126 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members for approval.

RESOLVED: That Internal Audit be thanked and the contents of the 2022/23 Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion, be noted.

23 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT - QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing & Resources submitted a report for the consideration of Members advising of progress against the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan.

The Chairman invited the Corporate Compliance and Governance Manager to present the report.

The Committee considered the report of progress against the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan as detailed on pages 127 to 139 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members for approval.

RESOLVED: Members noted the progress in the year to date.

24 QUARTERLY EXEMPTION REPORT

The Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Property submitted a report on the Council's use of an exemption from Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and/ or Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

The Chairman invited the Procurement and Contracts Manager to present the report.

A question was raised and responded to in relation to the GIS software detailed in the Request for Exemption from Contract Procedure Rules.

The Committee considered the Quarterly Report on Procurement Exemptions as contained on pages 141-146 of the Book of Reports, which had been presented to Members.

RESOLVED: that the Council's exemption activity be noted.

25 RIPA ACT - REGULAR MONITORING OF USE OF POWER

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report on the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

RESOLVED: Members noted that the Council has not had cause to use its powers under RIPA during the last 12 months.

26 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022/23

The Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Services submitted a report to consider the Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

RESOLVED: Members agreed that the AGS 2021/22, as set out in Appendix 1, and the AGS 2022/23, set out in Appendix 2 of the report be approved and commended to the Leader and Chief Operating Officer for signature.

Any subsequent changes to the Annual Governance Statements, following receipt of the final external audit reports from Grant Thornton, would be undertaken by the Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Services (s151 officer) in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

27 **AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME - JULY 2023**

The following minor changes to items on the work programme were suggested and the Democratic Services Officer agreed to make the amendments.

- Grant Thornton – Audit Plan 2022-23 should read 2021-22.
- The projected meeting dates from May 2024 onwards shown on the work programme had not yet been approved by Council.

Members also suggested that the Governance Issues (page 186 of the agenda) would need to be addressed and the Corporate Compliance & Governance Manager said she would amend the work programme to include an item.

The Chairman asked about the proposed briefing on the final accounts, however arranging a suitable date with Grant Thornton had so far proved difficult.

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Chairman