

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

18th September 2019

Present: Councillor Alan Amos in the Chair

Councillors Agar (Vice-Chairman), Barnes,
Hassan, S. Hodgson, Laurenson and
Roberts

Also in Attendance:

Natalie Ryan, Ernst & Young LLP

Officers: Mark Baldwin – Head of Finance
Andy – Head of Internal Audit
Bromage Shared Service
Shane Flynn – Corporate Director –
Finance and Resources
Chris – Auditor
Lawrence
Sian Stroud – Deputy Director -
Governance
Nina – Head of Strategic
Warrington Housing

19 Declarations of Interest

None.

20 Public Participation

None.

21 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 29th July 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22 Internal Audit Progress Report

The Head of the Internal Audit Shared Service presented the report which provided summary overviews of reviews completed in regard to the 2018/19 Internal Audit Plan. The report indicated continued progress in regard to the 2019/20 Internal Audit Plan with a number of reviews in progress. The Head of the Internal Audit Shared Service reported for those audits that are currently in progress summary overviews will be brought before Committee when they are finalised.

The majority of the 2018/19 reports returned an assurance of moderate or above, with the exception of Front Line Housing (Homelessness) which was 'limited'. The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service informed Committee that a robust action plan has been put in place for those areas that need to be strengthened.

Officers responded to questions from Members relating to findings on Benefits, Cemeteries & Crematorium, Front Line Housing and Payroll.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report.

23 External Audit - Local Government Briefing

The Head of Finance presented the briefing provided by the Council's External Auditors which summarises key changes and issues in the external environment that the External Auditors consider relevant for the Committee to note. The document will be updated and sent to the Committee regularly.

The Chair thanked the External Auditors for the good information provided. Members commented on the content of the briefing and asked Officers questions about the impact of external issues for the City Council.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the contents of the briefing note received from the Council's External Auditors.

24 External Audit - Annual Audit Letter 2018/19

Ms Natalie Ryan, Ernst & Young LLP, presented the External Audit – Annual Audit Letter 2018/19 to the Committee. The Annual Audit Letter summarises the key findings arising from the External Auditor's work for the City Council for the year ended 31st March 2018/19.

The External Auditors provided an unqualified opinion (i.e. a 'clean bill of health') on the City Council's Financial Statements and, Value for Money arrangements.

The Chair thanked Ernst & Young for their audit work and thanked Officers for their continued good work.

RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the details of the Annual Audit Letter for 2018/19.

25 Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report

The Deputy Director - Governance presented the Annual Report. It is part of CIPFA good practice to produce an annual report summarising the work of the Council's Audit and Governance Committee, which is then reported to full Council.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Committee approve the Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2018/19.**
- 2. That the Annual Report be submitted to Council for information.**

26 Guildhall Room Hire Charging Policy

The Chair requested the item be put on the Agenda to support the development of a charging policy which will provide clarity and consistency in setting the level of charges for Guildhall room hire.

The Corporate Director - Finance and Resources presented the report. A Room Hire Charging approach has been in place at the Guildhall for some time but the varied use of the building and changing business needs of the City Council has resulted in the need for a reviewed and updated policy.

Members asked about arrangements where groups used the Guildhall without charge, or at a reduced charge, but were not engaged on activities in partnership with the Council. The Corporate Director proposed the wording of section 5.4 to be amended to reflect this to:

'To support the work of partner organisations that are furthering the aims of the Council, in co-operation with Members and Officers of the Council, in bringing social, economic and environmental benefits to the City'.

Members asked about the inclusion of Civic functions, not necessarily in connection with the Mayor, for instance use of the Guildhall for medal presentations. The Director of Finance and Resources proposed the wording of section 5.5 of the policy be amended to reflect this to:

'To support events that are led by the Mayor and/or Civic Officers'.

The Corporate Director also drew Members' attention to section 5.7 of the policy which allows for the Democratic and Civic Services Manager or the Managing Director to use discretion where appropriate to reduce or waive charges.

RESOLVED: That the draft Guildhall Room Hire Charging Policy be considered by the Committee.

27 Corporate Governance Action Plan: Progress Report

The Deputy Director – Governance presented the report which demonstrates progress being made to deliver the Corporate Governance Action Plan. The Deputy Director – Governance asked Committee Members for their thoughts on the proposed Toolkit for Members on Outside Bodies and Member Training on Corporate Governance.

Members welcomed this proposal but some noted they preferred the term "Guidance" to "Toolkit". They commented that the Toolkit for Members on Outside Bodies would be a useful resource to be included in Member Induction Packs and available on the Members website. Members also suggested that the item should include a wider Council Members consultation.

Members discussed Member training in a broader context. It was acknowledged that while there were some core elements essential for all Members, on the whole training could be targeted at individual Members' special areas of interest and the business of particular committees. They agree that an all-Member survey to gauge wider preferences in regard to training would be useful.

RESOLVED: That the Committee notes the progress being made to deliver the actions set out in the Corporate Governance Action Plan.

28 Sansome Walk Decommissioning Lessons Learnt

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service presented the report detailing a 'lessons learnt' review of the Sansome Walk Swimming Pool decommissioning project.

Members were concerned that they had not received the exempt report providing legal advice on the item with sufficient time to consider the item in its entirety. The Chair proposed an additional meeting of the Committee be convened to allow Members more time to reflect on the report in light of the exempt report.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report, subject to any actions the Committee wish to take as a result of the extraordinary meeting.

29 Any Other Business

None.

30 Item Involving the Disclosure of Exempt Information

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act.

31 Sansome Walk Decommissioning Lessons Learnt

RESOLVED: That the item be deferred for discussed at an extraordinary meeting of the Committee.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00 pm to 8.55 pm

Chairman at the meeting on
18th December 2019