

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

23rd March 2022

- Present:** Councillor Alan Amos in the Chair
Councillors Agar, Barnes (Vice-Chair),
Bayliss, A. Ditta (in place of Councillor
Hassan), Johnson and Laurenson
- Officers:** Shane Flynn, Corporate Director – Finance
and Resources
Sian Stroud, Corporate Director – Planning
and Governance
Andy Bromage, Head of Internal Audit
Shared Services
- Apologies:** Councillor Hassan

15 Declarations of Interest

None.

16 Public Participation

None.

17 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18 Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2020-21

The Committee considered the Audit and Governance Committee Annual report 2020-21 which was attached as appendix 1.

The Annual Report shows how the Audit and Governance Committee has successfully achieved its objectives over the last year and has thereby made a positive contribution to the Council's overall governance and control environment.

The Corporate Director – Planning and Governance in presenting the report explained that the report was delayed beyond its usual timescale, pending the production of the Council's external audit findings. At the time of production of the Annual Report for this meeting the external findings of 2020-21 were still not available.

It was noted, however, that the pandemic did not delay or interrupt the work of the internal audit programme nor the work and meeting schedule of the Audit and Governance Committee, which continued uninterrupted.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

1. **approves the Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2020-21; and**
2. **recommend to full Council for information.**

19 Draft Internal Audit Plan 2022-23

The Committee considered the draft Annual Internal Audit Operational Plan (Appendix 1) for 2022-23.

The Head of the Internal Audit Shared Service presented the report and summarised key points within the plan at Appendix 1, which is a risk-based plan which takes into account the adequacy of the Council's risk management, performance management, challenges, other assurance processes as well as organisational objectives and priorities.

Operational progress of the Internal Audit Plan for 2022-23 will be closely monitored by the Head of the Internal Audit Shared Service and will be reported to the Shared Service's Client Officer Group, which comprises the Section 151 Officer's from client organisations' and to the Audit and Governance Committee on a quarterly basis.

A theoretical question was put to the Head of Internal Audit Shared Services whereby if a strategic project that the Council was engaged with didn't deliver its key objectives, would internal audit review the project to see what went wrong. The Head of Internal Audit Shared Services in response stated that they would be happy to report back on lessons learnt. He used Sansome Walk as an example.

There were no further questions from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approve the draft Internal Audit Plan for 2022-23.

20 Internal Audit Progress Report 2021-22

The Committee considered a report on Internal Audit's progress towards meeting its objectives as set out in the audit plan for 2021-22. The period of reporting covers up to 31st January 2022.

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service presented the report and summarised the main points. Details of appendices 1-5 attached to the report were highlighted at paragraphs 8.1-8.5

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Services elaborated on the report related to Sansome Walk, at the request of the Chairman. He explained that this was a special piece of work on a lessons learned review. The Audit follow up and current position was highlighted. Committee Members were informed that there were seven key areas and actions plans identified, six have been implemented with one still in progress.

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Services and the Corporate Director – Finance and Resources responded to questions from Committee Members related to the monitoring of single person discounts and to the issue of the cost of living for a lot of residents and the funding to be made available for this.

There were no further questions from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the report.

21 Review of Community Services Grants 2021-22

The Committee considered a report on the review of Community Grants for 2021-22.

The Chairman informed Committee Members that he had had requested that this report be brought before the Committee to give assurances that money allocated to groups was being spent in accordance with the stated objectives.

The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources presented the report and explained the grant allocation process.

The Corporate Director – Finance and Resources and the Corporate Director – Planning and Governance responded to a question from Committee Members related to the potential for publicity for the City Council from those groups that we allocate small grants to, it was agreed that this be passed onto the Community Grants Team as a requirement. A question was raised on the membership of the panel, who review small and medium grants, and how they were appointed, it was felt that there was a need to be open and transparent and accountable. Following some discussion officers agreed to carry out a review and bring a report back to Committee.

There were no further questions from Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee note the process for managing grant funding to third parties.

22 Any Other Business

Audit of Councillors

The issue of Councillors' attendance at meetings was raised. The question that was asked was whether there should be some audit activity about Councillors' attendance records at meetings and their productivity levels.

The Corporate Director – Planning and Governance stated that the overriding objective of the audit process is to give the assurance that the Council is operating within its framework of legislation and local rules. Council conduct is set out in legislation and in the Constitution which is the Council's own local set of rules; Councillors can propose new rules through a Notice of Motion to Council and this would be the place to speak about Councillor attendance and participation in meetings if Members wished to. Therefore, it was not clear what remit the audit process could have.

During discussions it was pointed out that there were many factors to take into account such as the number of committees that Councillors are on and what other meetings they attend outside of the Guildhall.

The public can see from the minutes of meetings when they are in attendance or not and the live stream of meetings now provides details on how productive Councillors are.

The Chairman in acknowledging the matter raised said that the matter at some stage could be referred to another council meeting.

Duration of the meeting: 7.00p.m. to 7.50p.m.

Chairman at the meeting on
13th July 2022