

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

held on 24 November 2022

Present:

Mrs C Storey (Chair)
Cllr P J T Graves (Vice-Chair)

Cllr A Caulfield Cllr G W Elson
Cllr G T Cosnahan

Absent: Councillors H Akberali and M I Raja

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Committee held on 5 October 2022 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H Akberali and M I Raja.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

5. UPDATE ON EXTERNAL AUDIT

Steve Bladen of BDO provided an update on the progress of the External Audit for the 2019/20 financial year and advised the Committee that the Auditors of the Thamesway accounts, Hamlyns LLP, had ceased to trade on 31 October 2021 and had been taken over by a new company with a new ownership. Accordingly, it had not been possible to finalise the external audit work with the accountancy firm and so BDO would be testing the amounts directly with Thamesway. A detailed breakdown of the work required was set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report circulated. The balances were stated to be highly material to the Council's balance sheet and so assurance was required.

The Chairman stated that the Committee was disappointed that the work had not taken place prior to Hamlyns ceasing to trade. Councillor Caulfield stated that he had undertaken research around the legal entities involved in the past year and agreed to pass the information onto the Committee.

It was noted that an initial request had been sent to Thameswey with a response provided and further discussions would be held. Steve advised that the timings should be able to be scoped over the next couple of weeks and it was not possible at the moment to provide a reliable estimate of cost. The Committee was assured that BDO had resources set aside to carry out the work as a team had been assigned to look at the 2020/21 accounts in the New Year and that external specialists would be asked to provide valuations.

Steve stated that once BDO was content with the Thameswey accounts, the remaining outstanding areas such as Minimum Revenue Provision and recoverability of loans, should be able to be completed relatively quickly.

The Chairman reported that following the last meeting a letter had been sent to Neil Harris, Head of Local Audit at the Financial Reporting Commission setting out the concerns of the Committee, which would be emailed to Committee members. Leigh Clarke, Director of Finance, advised that Grant Thornton had been appointed as the Council's External Auditors from the 2023/24 financial year.

RESOLVED

That the update be noted.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT STA22-019

The Committee received the Internal Audit Progress Report and noted that the three remaining reports from the 2021/22 plan – Risk Management, Cyber Security and Capital Programme – had now been finalised.

Following a question regarding the deferral of the Health and Safety Audit following the departure of the Senior Health and Safety Advisor, the Committee was advised that the work had been absorbed by the Human Resources team whilst consideration was given as to how the role could be undertaken in the future. It was noted that the Committee received annual reports on Health and Safety and the policies were due to be reviewed in 2022/23.

The Committee noted that the internal audit undertaken following the Covid period contained a number of recommendations that were no longer relevant and officers would consider how the Council could benefit from the remainder of the report so that it could be closed.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and progress against the 2022-23 Internal Audit Plan and implementation of Internal Audit recommendation be noted.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER STA22-020

The Committee noted the annual Internal Audit Charter which set out best practice, including the relationship with the Standards and Audit Committee; access to information relevant to the Audits; and the scope of Internal Audit activity. No concerns were raised.

RESOLVED

That the Internal Audit Charter be approved.

**8. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION AND CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING POLICIES
STA22-021**

The Committee received the bi-annual report on reviewing the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and the Confidential Reporting Policy.

RESOLVED

That the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Confidential Reporting Policy appended to the report be approved.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 7.35 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____