

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

held on 30 November 2017

Present:

Mrs C Storey (Chair)
Cllr J Kingsbury (Vice-Chair)
Cllr I Johnson Cllr A E Murray

Absent: Councillors M Ali and M A Whitehand

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Committee held on 21 September 2017 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor John Kingsbury declared a non-pecuniary interest in any items under which the Thamesway Group of Companies, Brookwood Cemetery or Victoria Square (Woking) Ltd were discussed, arising from his position as a Director of the subsidiary companies. The interest was such that speaking and voting were permissible.

In accordance with Officer Procedure Rules, the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, declared an interest in any items under which the Thamesway Group of Companies or Brookwood Cemetery were discussed, arising from his position as a Director of the subsidiary companies. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

3. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

Leigh Clarke, Finance Director, introduced the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter to the Committee, which summarised the findings of the External Auditors KPMG following the 2016/17 Audit. Leigh Clarke highlighted that there had been no changes since the Committee had received the 'External Audit Report to those Charged with Governance' report.

The Committee noted that page three of the report stated that no significant concerns over the financial resilience of the authority impacting on the Value for Money conclusion had been identified. It was added that the need for the local authority to achieve ongoing savings during a period of uncertainty over future Government funding would create a level of risk. However, the External Auditors were confident that a suitable contingency plan through the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy was in place to ensure the area did not need particular noting.

The Committee referred to the adjusted audit difference of circa £1.5m which related to the consolidation of Thameswey accounts into the Council's Statement of Accounts. Leigh Clarke stated that the reference to the adjustment being 'immaterial' was an error and would ensure that KPMG rectified the statement along with any mention in the previous report received by the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Audit letter be received.

4. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

James Graham, Head of Internal Audit, introduced the Internal Audit Progress Report to the Committee, which covered audit activity and performance from 1 April 2017 to 10 November 2017. The plan was on track to be completed by the end of March, with a further update to be received at the next meeting.

The Committee was advised that there was one ongoing high risk recommendation – Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery – and two new high risk recommendations arising from the recent Health and Safety Internal Audit. During the Audit it had had been noted that there had been no Health and Safety audits completed within the past 12 months and that completed Risk Assessments were not consistently being reviewed by the Health and Safety function of the Council.

Leigh Clarke updated the Committee following a meeting with Ray Morgan, Chief Executive, regarding the points raised in the Audit. It had been agreed to bring in external support to provide extra resource and enable a rolling programme of Health and Safety audits to begin from February 2018.

The Committee was advised that any Risk Assessments deemed 'high-risk' would be reviewed by the Council's Senior Health and Safety Officer, along with ten per cent of the other Risk Assessments. Outcomes would be reported to the Council's Corporate Management Group which held over-arching responsibility for Health and Safety. The Committee noted the importance of the Council's procedures for Health and Safety and it was agreed that an update would be received at the next meeting on the progress of dealing with the recommendations.

Leigh Clarke reported that the Health and Safety Committee had not been meeting as regularly as previously due to a review taking place of the membership and scope of the Committee. As a part of the review, it was intended that the Senior Health and Safety Officer would report directly to the Corporate Management Group.

Members were informed that each year a number of Internal Audit reports were completed towards the end of the financial year and these were currently being planned.

Following a question, James Graham noted that although deadlines for the completion of Internal Audit recommendations were fixed by managers, Internal Audit would ensure that they were set appropriately.

A draft Internal Audit report on Planning Services had been issued and it was suggested that an annual standing item could be received by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on how funds received from the Community Infrastructure Levy had been

spent. Peter Bryant undertook to liaise accordingly with the Chairman, Councillor Ian Johnson.

Leigh Clarke presented the Committee with a schedule of all Internal Audit recommendations currently outstanding and provided details of the progress on each. It was added that completed reports were available under the reference section of the Members' Ipads.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and progress against the 2017-2018 Internal Audit Plan and implementation of Internal Audit recommendations be noted.

5. REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR DEALING WITH STANDARDS ALLEGATIONS

Peter Bryant, Head of Democratic and Legal Services, introduced the report to the Committee which advised the Committee of a proposed review of the Council's arrangements for dealing with Standards allegations under the Localism Act 2011. The Committee was asked for a view on the engagement of Members and the Independent Person as a part of the review, with the initial intention to liaise through political Group Leaders.

The Committee expressed a preference for all Members to be notified that the review was taking place and given the opportunity to submit comments. Peter Bryant offered to meet Members to explain the changes if it would be helpful.

The Committee was informed that an updated version of the Council's procedure would be received at the next meeting of the Committee, and would include a copy setting out the proposed changes. It was noted that the powers held by the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee were legislative and did not include the option to suspend a Member.

RESOLVED

That the position regarding the proposed review of the Council's Arrangements for Dealing with Standards Allegations under the Localism Act 2011 be noted, with all Members to be notified of the review and given the opportunity to submit comments.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 7.45 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____