

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

held on 20 September 2018
Present:

Mrs C Storey (Chair)
Cllr M A Whitehand (Vice-Chair)

Cllr S Ashall Cllr R Mohammed
Cllr J E Bond

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Committee held on 19 July 2018 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor I Johnson, along with Peter Bryant and Leigh Clarke.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

5. ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

The Chairman reported that the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, which had been discussed at the July meeting of the Committee, had resulted in an unqualified audit letter and value for money conclusion being issued on 30 July 2018.

It was asked whether the audit fee of £54,000 was at an expected level and the Chairman confirmed that the fees were in line with those agreed at the beginning of the year.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter be received.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER

James Graham, Head of Internal Audit, introduced the report on the Internal Audit Charter, a formal document defining Internal Audit's purpose, authority and responsibility in accordance with UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. To be reviewed annually, there had been no changes to the Charter other than a slight restructuring with no amendments to the scope or responsibility of Internal Audit.

The Committee noted that sufficient Human Resources were in place to deal with the recommendations of Internal Audit.

RESOLVED

That the Internal Audit Charter be approved.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE PROGRESS UPDATE

The Committee received the quarterly Internal Audit Progress report, which set out the work undertaken by Internal Audit to date during the current financial year. James Graham reported that Internal Audit was largely on track to achieve the plan by the end of the year. There were no high risk recommendations or negative assurance reports finalised within the period. A total of 12 recommendations were classed as outstanding, however none of these were high priority.

Following questions, it was noted that there was potentially one negative assurance report at the draft stage – Windows OS Network Management – which contained two high priority recommendations and would be finalised within the coming weeks. In relation to the two Audits carried forward from the previous year which were not yet at a draft report stage, it was noted that the Victoria Square Development was particularly complex and involved dealing with senior people and so was taking longer to complete, and that General Data Protection Regulation would be likely to be completed in the coming weeks.

Following queries, it was noted that summaries of final reports were available to Members through the I pads, and that the Audit on New Vision Homes would include the process for dealing with complaints.

The Chairman requested that any new negative assurance draft reports should be highlighted to the Committee.

RESOLVED

That the report be received and progress against the 2018/19 Internal Audit Plan and implementation of Internal Audit recommendations be noted.

8. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

Joanne McIntosh, Legal Services Manager, introduced the report which advised the Committee of complaints submitted under the Members Code of Conduct during the year from 1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018.

In addition, the report sought the Committee's views on a proposed Protocol for Members submitting complaints under the Members' Code of Conduct, aimed at ensuring that a complaint was not prejudiced through comments submitted to the media and online social networks. It was proposed that the Monitoring Officer draft a Protocol to address the

matter, with all Members to be consulted, and the Committee was invited to provide its preliminary views.

The Chairman welcomed the low number of complaints against Councillors from members of the public and stated that the Protocol would aim to ensure that all parties to a complaint were dealt with fairly. It was noted that in the event of a complaint being prejudiced through comments to the media, the complaint could need to be passed to a neighbouring authority for determination.

The Committee broadly supported the concept of a Protocol although noted that it could be difficult to enforce; the Monitoring Officer could set aside prejudicial comments made in the media; and that an option was to ringfence the complaint between the two parties concerned and the Monitoring Officer until it had been resolved. It was added that an issue was also comments made through social media as opposed to the press.

RESOLVED

That the report detailing the complaints, submitted under the Members' Code of Conduct, received by the Monitoring Officer between 1 August 2017 and 31 July 2018 be noted.

9. OMBUDSMEN COMPLAINTS

Joanne McIntosh introduced the report which provided details of recent complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman. The Committee noted that no complaints were subject to the finding of maladministration by the Ombudsmen, and that the LGA website set out statistics regarding other local authorities for comparison along with information relating to scrutiny as to how Councils could be more challenging to the corporate environment in relation to complaints.

RESOLVED

That the position regarding complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman be noted.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 7.30 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____