

MINUTES
OF A MEETING OF THE
STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

held on 19 September 2019

Present:

Mrs C Storey (Chair)

Cllr S Ashall

Cllr L S Lyons

Absent: Councillors I Johnson, J E Bond and M A Whitehand

Note: In the absence of the Vice-Chairman, the Committee agreed that Councillor S Ashall should be appointed Vice-Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Committee held on 19 September 2019 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Bond, I Johnson and M Whitehand.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with the Officer Procedure Rules, the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, Peter Bryant, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items under which the Thameswey Group of Companies, Brookwood Cemetery or Duke's Court were discussed, arising from his position as a Director of the subsidiary companies. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

In accordance with the Officer Procedure Rules, the Finance Director, Leigh Clarke, declared a disclosable personal interest (non-pecuniary) in any items under which Duke's Court was discussed, arising from her position as a Director of Dukes Court Owner T S a r l. The interest was such that speaking was permissible.

4. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Urgent Business.

5. UPDATE ON EXTERNAL AUDIT STA19-012

The Committee received an update on the Council's External Audit which had not yet been completed. Approximately 40% of Local Government audits had not been finalised on time this year. Leigh Clarke, Finance Director, stated that no further adjustments or issues had been raised. The Committee noted that the Council's External Auditor, BDO, had emphasised the delay was not to the detriment of the Council. Substantive Audit work had taken place in the areas of asset valuation and pension fund valuation.

It was noted that a comment had been made by the External Auditors at the last meeting of the Committee regarding the presentation of the accounts, however due to the staff time taken up by the Audit process and the extent of the readership of the Accounts Leigh Clarke stated that a major change to the formatting would be hard to justify.

The Committee was advised that the delayed Audit would not affect the budget setting process for the next financial year. The Committee would be advised once the Accounts had been formally signed off following the completion of the Audit.

RESOLVED

that the update be received.

6. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT STA19-013

James Graham, Head of Internal Audit, introduced the report which summarised the internal audit activity from 1 April 2019 to 30 August 2019, including the progress in delivering the 2019/20 internal audit plan; a summary of limited / nil assurance reports and high priority recommendations; and implementation of recommendations. Since the publication of the report, the high priority recommendation for IT Disaster Recovery had been implemented.

Following questions, it was noted that there should be less work potentially carried forward to the next financial year. The latest completed audits set out under paragraph 3.5 of the report would be added to the Members' Ipads. In addition, with regard to the recommendation regarding the Risk Register and Issues Log documents for the Sheerwater Regeneration Governance, Peter Bryant, Head of Democratic and Legal Services, advised that it had always been intended that the Register and Log would be produced once construction had begun in July 2019. The Register and Log would be received by the Sheerwater Regeneration Delivery and Oversight Panel once drafting was complete.

RESOLVED

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

7. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT STA19-014

The Committee welcomed the report which stated that one complaint had been submitted under the Members' Code of Conduct over the past year, which had not merited formal investigation.

RESOLVED

That the report detailing the complaints, submitted under the Members' Code of Conduct, received by the Monitoring Officer between 1 August 2018 and 31 July 2019 be noted.

8. OMBUDSMEN COMPLAINTS STA19-015

The Committee received a report which set out details of recent complaints to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman. There had been two adverse findings against the Council, one of maladministration, with no injustice, arising from the Council's initial approach to the complaint, and the other relating to not handling a complaint in a timely manner. The Committee was advised that the procedural errors identified had been rectified by the Council.

RESOLVED

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

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm
and ended at 7.30 pm

Chairman: _____

Date: _____