

Audit Committee – 16 November 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 16 November 2022 when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr G W Myers

Cllr M R Carter

Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon

Cllr J L Lawmon

Cllr J R F Mason

Cllr Mrs C M Mason

Cllr R Milne

Cllr Mrs V A Wilson

OFFICERS PRESENT

N Lucas

M Porter

S Worthington

W Szyszka

- Assistant Director, Resources

- Chief Auditor, Basildon Borough Council

- Principal Democratic & Corporate Services Officer

- Democratic Services Officer

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs L A Butcher and Mrs L Shaw.

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Cllr Mrs J E McPherson

Cllr Mrs T L Carter

- for Cllr Mrs L A Butcher

- for Cllrs Mrs L Shaw

226 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to replacing 'Cllr J R F Mason' with 'Cllr Mrs C M Mason' at the beginning of the third paragraph of page 2.

227 AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2022/23

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Resources providing an update on the work of the Internal Audit team on progress made against the annual audit plan and action taken by service departments in implementing audit recommendations.

Resolved

- (1) That the update on delivering the 2022/23 Audit Plan, together with revised audit plan (at Appendix 4), be noted.
- (2) That the conclusions and results from completed audit engagements in Appendix 2 and 3 be noted.
- (3) That the updated status of audit recommendations in Appendix 5 be noted. (ADR)

228 APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Resources recommending to Full Council that an Independent Member be appointed to the Council's Audit Committee from the start of the new municipal year 2023/24.

Officers advised that further CIPFA guidance, published after the report was drafted, now recommended two Independent Members be appointed to Audit Committees in local authorities. However, the proposed legislative requirement was likely to be for a minimum of one Independent Member. It is envisaged that Rochford District Council (RDC) would appoint one Independent Member from the start of the new municipal year; an additional Member could be appointed in future, if required.

Officers also clarified that the Independent Members would have an advisory role and would not have voting rights, which was welcomed by Members.

A Member commented that they would prefer a more inclusive appointment process, thus ensuring that it was transparent. The Member further stated that the current recommendation (2) would not suffice to provide wide-ranging recruitment.

Cllr Mrs C M Mason moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr J R F Mason, that recommendation 2 be amended to: "That the recruitment of the Independent Member be delegated to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Chairman and 2 other Members of the Audit Committee."

Members, while supportive of the amendment, nevertheless noted that this could pose potential time constraints to meet the municipal year deadline.

The Motion was carried upon a show of hands.

(5 Members voted in favour, 3 Members against, and 2 Members abstained.)

Recommended to Council

- (1) That an Independent Member be appointed to the Council's Audit Committee from the start of the new municipal year, as recommended by central government following the Redmond Review, and in line with CIPFA best practice.
- (2) That the recruitment of the Independent Member be delegated to the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Chairman and 2 other Members of the Audit Committee. (ADR)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

229 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S RISK REGISTER

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Resources presenting a six-month review of the Council's Risk Register (CRR) for 2022/23.

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In response to a Member question, officers advised that each corporate risk was assigned to its own owner that would provide updates to be reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) before coming to Committee for review.

A Member requested that future corporate risks be included with contextual information providing Members with an insight into the risk and when it was first reported in order to better understand the risk and any actions taken by the Council to minimise it.

Officers responded that this was a reasonable request and would be implemented for future meetings of the Committee. Officers also clarified that more significant risks would be presented alongside any crucial contextual information to be brought to Members' attention.

A Member queried how information was inputted onto the risk register and how Members could access this information as well as receive relevant updates.

Officers responded that each corporate report had its own risk register analysis. Members could also be provided with updates should they request it by contacting the relevant corporate risk owner or inviting the corporate risk owner to come to Committee to discuss the risk with Members. This matter would be discussed outside of the meeting.

In response to a Member question whether there was a summary document containing detail of the findings against each corporate register available for Members' inspection, officers advised that the report was a summary of the findings; however, more detailed risk assessments containing supporting documentation were available upon request. Officers added that the Council followed a monitoring process that reviewed the risk registers and updated them accordingly should any changes occur.

A Member noted that officer documentation alongside more detailed data was useful in understanding risks and provided good support to Members.

Resolved

That the content of the Corporate Risk Register for 2022/23 be noted. (ADR)

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm.

Chairman

Date

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