

Audit Committee – 25 March 2014

Minutes of the meeting of the **Audit Committee** held on **25 March 2014** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T E Mountain
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs J A Mockford

Cllr Mrs L A Butcher
Cllr J D Griffin
Cllr Mrs A V Hale

Cllr Mrs D Hoy
Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr I H Ward

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C I Black and Mrs C E Roe.

OFFICERS PRESENT

Y Woodward - Head of Finance
T Metcalf - Audit and Performance Manager
S Worthington - Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

C Reed - BDO

59 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60 EXTERNAL AUDITOR REPORT UPDATES FOR 2012/13

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance drawing Members' attention to the recommendations arising from the annual governance report 2012/13.

In response to a Member question relating to the review of controls within the area of creditors and debtors, as detailed on pages 7.4 and 7.5 of the officer's report, the external auditor advised that BDO has not yet audited this. It was, however, noted that Internal Audit has recently conducted an audit of these processes and is satisfied with controls in this area.

Resolved

That the monitoring sheet for the BDO recommendations arising from the annual governance report for 2012/13 be agreed. (HF)

61 EXTERNAL AUDITOR REPORT: GRANTS CLAIM AND RETURNS CERTIFICATION 2012/13

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance drawing

Members' attention to the grants claim and returns certification 2012/13 document from the Council's external auditor, BDO.

Responding to a Member query relating to errors in housing and council tax benefit payments, officers advised that during this particular 12-month period, over 16,000 changes in circumstances transactions had been carried out by benefits staff; many of the 25 errors that had been identified were minor, one off errors. It was not unusual for a single benefits claim to have multiple transactions associated with it. In this context, the error margin was not significant and the amendment to the final figure, was very minor, £1,344.00 in the context of the total figure of £22,633,205.00.

The external auditor confirmed, in response to a supplementary Member question, that checks were conducted on random samples of benefit claims and the audit findings were extrapolated based on these samples.

In response to a further Member enquiry relating to the number of staff processing claims, officers advised that there were approximately 12 officers dealing with housing, council tax and business rates claims. In addition, the manager regularly conducts sample testing of claims; it was reiterated that the number of errors was very small, particularly in relation to the actual number of transactions in this area.

Resolved

That the grants claim and returns certification for 2012/13 be noted. (HF)

62 SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS FOR THE AUDIT COMMITTEE 2014-15

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Finance outlining a schedule of business for the Audit Committee in 2014-15.

The Committee noted that the impact of the increased car parking charges (to be introduced from April 2014) will be reviewed by the Review Committee in July.

In response to a Member question relating to changes in the budget timetable for 2014/15, officers confirmed that this would not affect the schedule of business for this Committee.

Resolved

That the schedule of business for the Audit Committee for 2014-15 be noted. (HF)

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining item of business on the grounds that exempt information, as detailed in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972, would be disclosed.

63 AUDIT REPORT

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Finance drawing Members' attention to completed audit investigations and providing an update of audit recommendations.

In response to a Member request relating to report 7 detailed on page 11.3 of the report, officers confirmed that Members would be provided with a breakdown of business rates data, on a parish by parish basis.

Responding to a Member question relating to banking arrangements, officers advised that the Council still banks with the Cooperative bank, but that this arrangement was being closely monitored. The Council has reduced the amount of cash held with the bank and has an additional account with Barclays. In response to an additional Member query relating to the benefits of continuing to bank with the Co-op, officers advised that Council Tax bills had been sent out to residents requesting that Council Tax payments be made to the Co-op; there would be a large amount of work involved in changing these payment arrangements.

Resolved

- (1) That the conclusions and results from the audit engagements in appendix 2 be agreed.
- (2) That the updated information on the audit recommendations, outlined in appendix 3, be agreed. (HF)

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.

Chairman

Date

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