

Audit Committee – 27 September 2023

Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 27 September 2023 when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr R Milne
Vice-Chairman: Cllr S A Wilson

Cllr N J Booth
Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon
Cllr J N Gooding
Cllr R C D Linden

Cllr D W Sharp
Cllr A L Williams
Cllr Mrs V A Wilson
Cllr S E Wootton

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Cllr L A Butcher

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Cllr S E Wootton - for Cllr L A Butcher

NON-MEMBERS ATTENDING

Cllr C M Stanley

OFFICERS PRESENT

E Yule	- Strategic Director
T Willis	- Interim Director Resources
M Porter	- Audit and Counter Fraud Manager
W Szyszka	- Democratic Services Officer
V Meanwell	- Democratic Services Officer

183 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

184 2022/2023 FINANCIAL OUTTURN/DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (UNAUDITED)

Members considered the report of the Interim Director Resources summarising the overall financial outturn position for financial year 2022/23.

In response to a Member question the Interim Director Resources explained that £0.250m that has been set aside to create a new reserve from the underspend, this is not an active spend and for it to be used decisions would need to be made by Council so there will be a transparency around spending the money.

In response to a Member question the Interim Director Resources explained that the accounts presented to the committee for scrutiny and on the website needed enough clarity so they are understood by the average reader and this is something we could do better.

Resolved

That the 2022/23 Financial Outturn / Draft Financial Statements (Unaudited) be noted. (IDR)

185 Q1 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Members considered the report of the Audit and Counter Fraud Manager on the work of the of the Internal Audit Team and progress made against the annual audit plan for 2023/24.

In response to a Member question the Audit and Counter Fraud Manager explained that progress is being made by Service departments in implementing audit recommendations, however for some items there was no response from the assigned officers.

The Interim Director Resources explained that staffing resources will always be an issue but not an excuse not to take the actions that were agreed. Where the risk is highest and delays longest these will be addressed.

The Strategic Director explained that Corporate Leadership Team do look at performance measures across the organisation and would expect to see a more thorough note in this report as to why a deadline has not been met, however the report is a snapshot in time, and some of this issues will have been addressed. It was explained that there have been no major concerns reported around the resourcing of service areas.

In response to a Member question Interim Director Resources explained that Working from home had not made managing performance more difficult. Performance management focuses on outputs and tasks, linked to service plans and supplemented by service performance reporting.

In response to a Members question the Interim Director Resources that the HR Director has briefed the CLT and there are no significant issues around equal pay claims, but there should be provision set up for risks and contingencies.

This is something on the Council's radar and will be picked up as part of this year's finances.

In response to a Member question the Strategic Director explained that staff do have regular one to ones with managers and they do monitor team and personal performance indicators but if the recommendations from internal audit were not already being picked up during these conversations, CLT would raise this with directors and managers.”

Every area has a Service Plan and with the OneYou conversations there is an opportunity for managers to speak with their staff and look at performance management. The conversations take place annually and then it is up to managers to decide how often they make contact with their staff but it is expected at least monthly. During these conversation progress on objectives will be discussed as will wellbeing conversations. Employees at RDC are empowered to work how they see fit and a blended approach can allow for less distractions and staff being more accessible.

In response to a Member question the Interim Director Resources explained that there will be a recruitment campaign fairly soon for an Independent Person. There will be a campaign for both Brentwood and Rochford at the same time we are just awaiting approval from Brentwood, the job description will be identical for both.

Resolved

That the update on delivering the 2023/24 Audit Plan and associated appendices be noted. (IDR)

186 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr J Gooding that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

(This was unanimously agreed)

187 CONTRACT AWARD REVIEW

The Members considered the exempt report of the Interim Director Resources in relation to the Contract Award Review

Debate of this item is set out in the exempt appendix to the Minutes.

The meeting closed at 9.06pm.

Chairman

Date

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