

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2022 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. McGarvey (Chairman)

Cllr. Morris (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Barnes, London, Morris and Osborne-Jackson

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Kitchener, Pender and Williamson

Cllr Brown and Cllr Dickins were present via a virtual media platform which does not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972

26. Minutes

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 23 September 2021 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

27. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

28. Actions from Previous Meeting

There were none.

29. Responses of the Council, Cabinet or Council Committees to the Committee's reports or recommendations

There were none.

CHANGE IN ORDER OF AGENDA ITEMS

The Chairman, with the Committee's agreement took agenda item 5 after agenda item 10.

30. Statement of Accounts 2020/2021

The Head of Finance updated Members on the progress of the Statement of Accounts 2020/21 and advised that the Statement of Accounts would be brought to the March 2022 meeting for final sign off. The Chairman advised that the

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Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities [guidance extract](#) acknowledged that the pandemic had impacted the sign off of accounts.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

31. Internal Audit Progress Report 2021/2022

The Acting Audit Manager presented the report which updated Members on the progress of the Internal Audit Plan and advised that two amendments to the 2021/22 Audit Plan were requested to be approved as set out in paragraph 7 of Appendix A, which were the deletion of the 'New Service Review - Environmental Health and Building Control' audit due to the recent ending of the partnerships, and the deferral of the 'Ethical Governance' review which was due to be completed in Quarter 3 until Quarter 1 2022/23 when the new Audit Manager has started.

He further advised that five Audits had been completed in the period and the outstanding previous actions which had been deferred had been implemented.

Resolved: That

a) the contents of the report be noted; and

b) the amendments to the 2021/22 Audit Plan, as set out in paragraph 7 of Appendix A, be approved.

32. Risk Management Strategy

The Deputy Chief Executive, and Chief Officer - Finance and Trading presented the report which outlined the new strategy which was based on latest good practice which would assist the Council to effectively manage risks to the achievement of its objectives, both in terms of reducing threats to an acceptable level and maximising available opportunities.

Resolved: That the Risk Management Strategy be approved.

33. Audit Committee Independent Members - Update

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Finance and Trading presented the report which updated Members on the investigatory work carried out by the Chairman of the Audit Committee for the consideration of appointing Independent Member(s) to the Audit Committee.

Members discussed the report, noting that that any suitable candidate(s) would require the necessary technical knowledge and skills to be of value to the business of the Committee. It is noted that Government has said recently that it will set out the case for making independent members a statutory requirement, which may require prompt action in order to acquire suitable candidate(s).

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Members also discussed remuneration of the post(s) and making joint appointment(s) with Dartford BC on joint appointments.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Council that up to two additional co-opted non-voting members be appointed, at a rate of remuneration similar to other Kent Districts, which may be reviewed after 1 year. The Committee were also supportive of working with Dartford BC on joint appointments.

34. Future Appointment of External Auditors Report

The Deputy Chief Executive, and Chief Officer - Finance and Trading presented the report which set out the need for Full Council to make a decision to either opt into the national framework for the procurement of external audit as supported by the Local Government Association (LGA) or to run a separate procurement exercise for the future appointment of external auditors.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Full Council that the Council opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors for five financial years from 1 April 2023.

35. Chairman's Audit Committee Report to Council

The Chairman presented the report for Council to update Members on the work of the Audit Committee and advised that the newly appointed Audit Manager would attend the next Audit Committee meeting in March. The report would be updated appropriately in respect of sign-off of the Statement of Accounts and in respect of item 33 above (appointment of up to two independent members on Audit Committee).

36. Work Plan

The work plan was noted with the following additions to the March 2022 meeting: Statement of Accounts 2020/21 and 6 monthly review of the Strategic Risk Register

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.30 PM

CHAIRMAN