

Minutes of Accounts & Audit Committee

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 18 November 2015 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor K Hind (Chairman)

Councillors:

P Ainsworth	S Hind
S Atkinson	G Mirfin
I Brown	N C Walsh
G Geldard	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Head of Financial Services, Karen Murray and Caroline Stead (Grant Thornton).

Councillors P Dowson and A Knox were not in attendance.

438 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor R Newmark.

439 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 August 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

440 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

441 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

442 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2014-2015

Karen Murray submitted a report on behalf of Grant Thornton which summarised the key findings arising from the work that had been carried out at Ribble Valley Borough Council for the year ending 31 March 2015. She informed Committee that Grant Thornton had issued an unqualified opinion on the Council's 2014/2015 financial statements and an unqualified value for money conclusion on 8 September 2015. The opinion confirmed that the financial statements gave a true and fair view of the Council's financial position and of the income and expenditure recorded by the Council. The key messages arising from the audit of the Council's financial statements were:

- the accounts presented for audit were well prepared;
- no adjustments to the accounts were identified affecting the Council's reported financial position; and

- the draft financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2015 recorded total comprehensive income and expenditure of £3.2m and a general fund balance of £2.1m.

They were currently completing the work to certify the Council's 2014/2015 housing benefit grant claim and this should be completed ahead of 30 November 2015 deadline, after which the outcome would be reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee. The audit fee was confirmed as £53,602 for the audit and £14,080 for the grant certification fee.

The Chairman thanked Grant Thornton for this report.

443 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2015/2016

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the internal audit work progress to date for 2015/2016. The report included a full audit plan for Committee's information as well as the specific audits that had been completed since the last report to Committee in August. She was pleased to inform Committee that progress to date with the 2015/2016 audit plan was satisfactory.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

444 GRANT THORNTON PROGRESS REPORT

Karen Murray on behalf of Grant Thornton submitted a report on their progress in delivering their responsibilities as external auditors. The paper also included a summary of emerging national issues and developments that may be relevant and a number of challenge questions in respect of those emerging issues, which Members may wish to consider. The report outlined the various aspects of the audit and the timetable for completion which was on track. The Director of Resources reported that a senior accountant would be attending the workshop on the impact of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which would include information on the requirement for the statement of accounts for 2017/2018 financial year to be prepared by 31 May 2018 and audited by 31 July 2018.

With reference to the emerging issues, Karen Murray highlighted a practical guide for local leaders with regard to making devolution work; the Business Location Index; Audit Committee Effectiveness Review; supporting members in governance; plans from the Chancellor for Local Government to gain new powers and retain local taxes; local plans for new homes by 2017; and improving efficiency of Council Tax collection.

The Chief Executive reported that he would be holding a seminar for Members with regard to combined authorities on 3 December 2015 in preparation for an agenda item at Council on 15 December 2015. The Chairman asked that the issues around the starter homes fund (local plans for new homes by 2017) be considered by Health and Housing Committee. The Director of Resources circulated a copy of the response to the DCLG consultation regarding improving efficiency for Council Tax collection for Committee's information.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

445 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reported from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

446 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the next item of business being exempt information under Category 3, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

447 RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE ON RED RISKS

The Director of Resources submitted a report providing Members with an update on the current areas of high risk for the Council as identified on the Risk Register. At the present time, there were two red risks included on the register.

- Waste management – The red risk is concerned with the ending of cost sharing in March 2018 and the subsequent loss of £430,000 income per annum. Although the Council was now operating under cost sharing this agreement had yet to be signed. As a result of this payments for the first two quarters of the year were outstanding from Lancashire County Council.

The Chief Executive updated Committee. After protracted discussions with LCC regarding the legal agreement he confirmed it would be signed within the next few days.

- Members discussed in some detail the link between planning decisions and appeal costs.

The Director of Resources explained the basis of the planning appeal reserve and how it was used. She added that this information should be considered by Planning and Development Committee on a regular basis.

RESOLVED: That an information report on the costs associated with planning appeals be submitted to the Planning and Development Committee on a regular basis.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Jane Pearson (425111).