

Minutes of Accounts & Audit Committee

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 30 March 2016, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor K Hind (Chairman)

Councillors:

P Ainsworth	S Hind
S Atkinson	R Newmark
I Brown	N C Walsh

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

Councillor P Dowson, G Geldard and A Knox were not in attendance.

654 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor G Mirfin.

655 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

656 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no pecuniary and non-pecuniary declarations of interest.

657 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

658 CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS TIMETABLE 2015/16

The Director of Resources submitted a report reminding Members of the statutory requirement to close down our accounts by 30 June 2016 and to publish them, including any certificate, opinion or report issued by the Auditor by 30 September 2016 and to inform Committee of the benefits of closing down the accounts by these deadlines, in particular the Good Governance aspects.

The principal matters covered in the Accounts and Audit Regulations were highlighted and in particular two key changes. These included important procedural requirements as well as governance issues. The two key changes were with regard to the authority commencing a 30 day period for the exercise of public rights; for the 2015/16 Statement of Accounts, this must also include the first 10 working days of July and also with regard to the advertisement of the 30 working day period for the exercise of public rights, which must be published on the Council's website including a copy of the unaudited Statement of Accounts,

together with a declaration of the Responsible Financial Officer as to the status of the accounts as unaudited and that they may be subject to change.

The Head of Financial Services highlighted the principal matters covered by the Regulations relevant to accounts preparation and the various responsibilities with regards to both Members and the Responsible Financial Officer. He highlighted the transitional provisions under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in order to abide by the new deadlines set for 2017/18.

He made reference to the issues facing Ribble Valley which included budget pressures and practical issues including the importance of attending the scheduled meeting for the approval of the audited statement of accounts on Wednesday, 17 August 2016. He outlined a timetable that must be strictly adhered to in order to achieve the deadlines required.

RESOLVED: That Committee endorse the suggested approach for the closure of the 2015/16 accounts.

659 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL PLAN 2016/17

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of the Internal Audit Plan for 2016/17; this included the various audit areas and planned number of working days for each of these areas. A brief explanation was given as to how the audit plan is arrived at following consultation with Directors, Heads of Service and our external auditors. The risk scoring method was also explained to Members.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the 2016/17 Internal Audit Plan as outlined.

660 GRANT CERTIFICATION REPORT 2014/15

Caroline Stead presented a report on the certification of claims and returns. She reported that the one claim for the financial year 2014/15 relating to expenditure of £7.5m had been certified; this was with reference to the housing benefit subsidy claim. She reported that this claim had been certified without any amendments and that they were satisfied that the Council had appropriate arrangements to compile, complete accurate and timely claims and returns for audit certification.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

661 GRANT THORNTON PROGRESS REPORT UPDATE 2015/16

Caroline Stead gave a brief update to Members on the progress made to date with the 2015/16 audit. Most of this was complete apart from the final accounts audit which was planned to take place between June and August. The report also made reference to local government accounting and other issues.

The Chairman highlighted the un-lodged non-domestic rate appeals that may well have implications for us in the future.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

662 THE AUDIT PLAN FOR RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Caroline Stead submitted a report for Committee's information, highlighting Grant Thornton's overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. The document was also an aid to understanding the consequence of their work; discusses issues of risk and the concept of materiality and identifies any areas where the Council may choose to request to undertake additional procedures. The contents of the plan had been discussed with management. She highlighted that Grant Thornton's responsibilities are to give an opinion on the Council's financial statements and to satisfy themselves that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The plan outlined the challenges and opportunities, developments and other requirements as well as materiality. It went on to identify three significant risks along with others.

She highlighted a change in the criteria with regard to value for money in that the guidance identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate; in all significant respects the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and employed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for tax payers and local people.

She reported that at the present time there was nothing that needed to be brought to the particular attention of Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

663 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2015/16

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining progress on the internal audit work for 2015/16. A table setting out the assurance opinions issued from the audits carried out since the last meeting was included for Members' information. All but one of these areas had received either a full or substantial assurance opinion.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

664 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

665 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

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 was only one red risk included on the register which related to waste management and was regarding the indicated ending of cost sharing in March 2018 and the loss of £430,000 per annum to support the service.

The Head of Financial Services reported that the planning appeals risk had now been downgrade from red 7 to amber 5 as the likelihood for any applications for costs had been reduced and the current financial impact had also been reduced. Both these areas were regularly considered by the Community Services Committee and the Planning and Development Committee.

The Chairman raised two issues that might be considered as red risks in the future subject to how their financial aspects become apparent over time. These related to flooding and business rate relief and appeals. The Director of Resources gave a brief update on these two issues and informed Committee that they were being considered by both the Budget Working Group and Policy and Finance Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.20pm.

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