

Minutes of Accounts & Audit Committee

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 18 October 2017 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chairman)

Councillors:

P Ainsworth	A Knox
I Brown	G Mirfin
P Dowson	R Newmark
L Graves	R Sherras
B Hilton	R Thompson

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

330 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence from the meeting.

331 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

332 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

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

333 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

334 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2016/2017

Karen Murray submitted the Annual Audit Letter 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 year ending 31 March 2017. She informed Committee that Grant Thornton had issued an unqualified opinion on the Council's 2016/2017 financial statements and an unqualified value for money conclusion. 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 certification of grants had also been completed.

The value for money conclusion confirmed the external auditors were satisfied that the Council had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2017. She informed Committee that the Council had made the accounts available for audit in line with the agreed timetable and providing an excellent set of working papers to support them.

The Chairman thanked Grant Thornton for their report and was very pleased with this independent assessment of the Council's finances.

335 INTERNAL PROGRESS REPORT 2017/2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the internal audit progress to date for 2017/2018. The report included the full Internal Audit Plan for 2017/2018 for Committee's information.

The report highlighted the audit work and reports issued since the last report to Committee in July 2017 which had been spent completing audits on the procurement system, flexitime system and cash receiving system. All these audits had reached a full assurance opinion level.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

336 GRANT THORNTON PROGRESS UPDATE

Karen Murray on behalf of Grant Thornton submitted a report on their progress on delivering their responsibilities as external auditors. They were about to start work on the housing benefit subsidy claim which would be completed by the end of November. 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.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

337 EXTERNAL AUDITOR APPOINTMENT – 2018/2019 ONWARDS

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of the progress to date on the appointment of our external auditor from 2018/2019 onwards. Committee were reminded that the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 brought to a close the Audit Commission and established transitional arrangements for the appointment of external auditors and the setting of audit fees for all local government and NHS bodies in England. The Act had also set out the arrangements for the appointment of auditors for subsequent years. In July 2016 Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) were specified by the Secretary of State as an appointing person under Regulation 3 of the Local Audit (Appointed Person) Regulations 2015. The PSAA had invited the Council to opt in along with all other authorities so that PSAA could enter into a number of contracts with appropriately qualified audit firms and appoint a suitable firm to be the Council's auditor. The Committee had agreed to do this and this had been approved by Full Council.

As a result of the PSAA procurement of auditor services, authorities will collectively benefit from reduced fees for audit services in 2018/2019 equivalent to a reduction of approximately 18% in scale fees payable by local bodies.

A period of consultation by PSAA ran from 14 August to 22 September on the proposed appointment of auditors. At the beginning of that consultation, the authority had been informed that the proposed auditors were to be Grant Thornton UK LLP. Confirmation had been given to PSAA that we were satisfied with that proposed appointment and now final confirmation was expected.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

338 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

The Chairman expressed best wishes on behalf of the Committee to Karen Murray who would no longer be the lead officer on the Ribble Valley Borough Council external audit.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.47pm.

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