

Minutes of Accounts & Audit Committee

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 12 February 2020, starting a 6.30pm
Present: Councillor R Bennett (Chairman)

Councillors:

I Brown	A Humphreys
B Buller	R Newmark
L Edge	D Peat
S Fletcher	R Sherras
J Hill	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Head of Financial Services and Sophia Iqbal (Grant Thornton).

Not in attendance: Councillor M Hindle.

Also in attendance: Councillors A Knox and S O'Rourke.

596 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies submitted for the meeting.

597 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

598 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

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

599 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

600 CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS TIMETABLE 2019/20

The Director of Resources submitted a report reminding Members of the statutory requirement to close down the accounts by 31 May 2020 and publish them, including any certificate, opinion or report issued by the Auditor, by 31 July 2020. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 set out detailed requirements in relation to duties and rights and also brought in changes to the key deadlines for approval of the Statement of Accounts and completion of the audit.

The principal matters covered in the Accounts and Audit Regulations were highlighted by the Head of Financial Services for Committee's information. The Regulations also stipulated various responsibilities for closure of accounts relating to Members and the responsible financial officer.

Reference was also made to budget implications and practical issues and the importance of attending the scheduled meeting for the approval of the audited Statement of Accounts at the proposed meeting on Wednesday, 29 July 2020. 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 2019/20 accounts.

601 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL PLAN 2020/21

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of the Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21. This included the various audit areas and planned number of working days for each of the areas. A brief explanation was given as to how the Audit Plan was arrived at following consultations with Directors, Heads of Service and the external Auditors. The risk-based methodology was also explained to Members and how this helps prioritising the various audits.

This was the last report prepared by Mick Ainscow as Principal Auditor as he had now retired from the post.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan as outlined; and
2. a letter of thanks be sent to Mick Ainscow for his 29 years' service in Audit.

602 GRANT THORNTON AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT AND SECTOR UPDATE

Sophia Iqbal presented a report on the audit progress as at January 2020. The audit opinion had been issued for the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts on 29 July 2019 and planning had started for the 2019/20 audit where a detailed Audit Plan would be issued setting out the proposed approach to the audits of the Council's 2019/20 Financial Statements. The interim audit would begin in March 2020 and a report on the audit findings and their opinion on the Statement of Accounts would be issued by 31 July 2020.

The Value for Money Audit requires the auditors to satisfy themselves that "the Council had made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources".

She reported that they had also issued an unqualified report on the Council's housing benefit subsidy claim and no amendments were required to the original submission.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

603 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2019/20

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the internal audit progress to date for 2019/20. The report highlighted the audit work and reports issued since the last report to Committee including the aim to review all of the Council's fundamental systems before the end of the financial year. All

the audits carried out since the last meeting in November 2019 had reached full assurance levels.

Members were updated on staffing issues within the audit team and the impact this may have on progress including prioritisation of work.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

604 REVIEW OF LOCAL AUTHORITY FINANCIAL REPORTING AND EXTERNAL AUDIT - CALL FOR VIEWS

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information providing them with details of the Council's response to the call for views on the independent review into the arrangements in place to support the transparency and quality of Local Authority financial reporting and external audit in England.

The review would examine the existing purpose, scope and quality of statutory audits of Local Authorities in England and the supporting regulatory framework. The consultation was now closed and feedback was being analysed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 6.53pm.

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