

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Date: 25 November 2020

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Time: 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: Peter Wathen (Chairman)
Alex Smith (Vice Chairman)

Rosalie Beattie Sylvia Hughes
Richard Gell Peter Tomas
Sylvia Hobbs Robin Underwood

External attendees: Rachel Ashley-Caunt (Head of Internal Audit)

261. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Annabel De Capell Brooke.

262. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2020 were approved as a correct record.

263. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

264. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

No questions were submitted under Procedure Rule 10.3.

265. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE AND RECOMMENDATION MONITORING

The Head of Internal Audit presented a report which provided information on the progress made by Internal Audit on the delivery of the Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21 and associated measures of performance.

It was reported that good progress was being made with a number of audit assignments, despite delays resulting from Covid-19. Since the last meeting of this Committee, two audit assignments had been completed, one of which related to grant certification. Building Control had received 'good' assurance opinions for both control environment and compliance. It was noted that ENC's Building Control service had made a deficit in the last two years based on chargeable costs. Officers advised that there had been a reduction in income to several sources across the organisation due to Covid-19, and that government funding would offset some of this. It would also be factored into any financial reporting measures.

The Committee was advised that two further actions had been implemented in addition to the 37 as stated in the report; these related to temporary staffing. Officers noted that good progress had been made regarding bank reconciliations; although Covid-19 had delayed its implementation, it was now on target to be completed in December 2020. The Council were in the process of reviewing the updated guidance and toolkit received in relation to procurement and this would be brought before CMT before Christmas, to formally adopt those measures into the Council procurement procedures.

RESOLVED:

To note the progress and performance of the Internal Audit service and the key findings from audits delivered during the period.

(Reason: to review the performance of Internal Audit against the agreed plan and any key findings regarding the council's risk management and control arrangements in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards)

266. FIRE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS OF HOUSING PROVIDERS

The Housing Strategy Manager gave a verbal report, advising that since the Grenfell Tower tragedy, works had been undertaken to ensure the Registered Providers (RP's) and hotel providers in the district were fully compliant with fire safety measures. A study was undertaken to ascertain what fire safety measures were already in place, which provided confidence that they were indeed sufficient. RP's had demonstrated a commitment to ensuring policies were adhered to and fire safety measures were in place, and it was felt that this should be revisited on a regular basis to ensure that this was maintained and that any issues that may arise could be dealt with swiftly. Some RP's had yet to respond, and their chief executives were now being approached to ensure that a response would be received.

It was noted that there was some external cladding on some properties owned by the Longhurst Group; a mixture of houses and low rise flats. The materials used for this had been certified as fire safe, and would continue to be monitored. The Committee thanked the team involved for their hard work in gathering the relevant fire safety information from RP's.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal update be noted.

267. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following items as exempt information as defined under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, was likely to be disclosed.

268. RISK MONITORING UPDATE

The Finance Manager presented a report which provided an update on the council's risk register for Quarter 2 Risks 2020/21.

RESOLVED:

To note the status of risks included in the report for Quarter 2 2020/21.

(Reason: To ensure the council has an up to date and effective risk reporting and governance process in place)

269. ASSET MANAGEMENT AND CYBER SECURITY UPDATE

Members received and considered the minutes of the Governance & Audit Working Party held on 9th November 2020. They were not for publication in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Head of Economic and Commercial Development gave an update in respect of the implementation of the Asset Management audit recommendations; and the Head of Resources gave an update in respect of the Cyber Security audit recommendations.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Governance & Audit Working Party be noted.

Chairman