

Decisions of the Audit Committee

15 December 2021

Rohit Grover (Chairman)
Alex Prager (Vice-Chairman)

Laithe Jajeh
Kathy Levine
Councillor Lachhya Gurung
(substituting for Nick Mearing-Smith)

Alison Moore
Arjun Mitra

Also in attendance

Geraldine Chadwick – Independent Member
Richard Harbord – Independent Member

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING (Agenda Item 1):

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

2. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS (IF ANY) (Agenda Item 2):

Apologies were received from Councillor Nick Mearing-Smith who was substituted by Councillor Lachhya Gurung.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER INTERESTS (IF ANY) (Agenda Item 3):

None.

4. REPORT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER (IF ANY) (Agenda Item 4):

None.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION AND COMMENTS (IF ANY) (Agenda Item 5):

The committee noted that details of a written comments submitted were circulated to the Committee and published.

6. MEMBERS' ITEMS (IF ANY) (Agenda Item 6):

None.

7. EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT ON PROGRESS OF THE AUDIT OF THE COUNCIL'S 2020/21 ACCOUNTS (Agenda Item 7):

The Council's Chief Accountant introduced the report and provided an update for Members.

The Chairman welcomed External Auditors Lisa Chapman and Michael Bediako from BDO who had joined the meeting virtually. They presented their report to the Committee and provided an overview of the key themes. The Audit Committee received an update on the progress of the external audit of the Council's 2020/21 Statement of Accounts. Members noted the appendix to the report as published.

The Committee had the opportunity to consider and comment on the report.

Councillor Alison Moore noted that the Appendix to the report was late despite the meeting being put back to 15 December 2021. She therefore noted her concerns and frustrations on this.

Having considered the report the Committee:

Resolved

That the Committee noted the progress of the 2020/21 external audit as presented by BDO LLP.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT EXCEPTION RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT AND Q2 PROGRESS REPORT (Agenda Item 8):

The Head of Internal Audit introduced the report. Members were requested to note the progress against internal audit recommendations and work completed to date on the Internal Audit Plan 2021-22 and critical, high and medium priority internal audit recommendations.

The Head of Internal Audit noted that the Operations Director for Re, Mr Alun Parfitt was in attendance virtually to make a representation. The Chairman duly welcomed Mr Parfitt to the meeting and invited him to provide comments. Mr Parfitt gave an overview of the progress that had been made against the actions and recommendations in the report into Local Land Charges – Review of Planning Data Controls and Policies. As a result of this Councillor Alison Moore requested that the Committee received an update on the progress at the April meeting.

The Head of Internal Audit noted the detail in the report in regard to Danegrove School. She added that the Council's internal Audit team were in regular contact with the School. Members noted that the School had undergone a number of changes including the appointment of a new Headteacher and an imminent change to the post of the School's Business Manager. The Committee noted concerns on this matter and said that they looked forward to receiving an update on this at a future meeting. The Head of Internal Audit stated that the report had been discussed by the School's Governors but not until November. It was agreed that enquiries would be made as to the support that Council Finance Officers may be able to provide to the School.

Mrs Geraldine Chadwick noted that a number of the outstanding actions should have been implemented and she questioned why such actions had not been completed considering the length of time it had been since the audit in May, she therefore noted her concerns and requested that a School representative be invited to a future meeting. The Chairman noted these concerns and agreed that in advance of the February 2022 Committee meeting he would discuss progress on actions with the Head of Internal

Audit, following which a decision would be made as to whether a school representative should be invited.

The Council's Assistant Director HR and OD was in attendance virtually and was able to answer questions relating to agency staff, system access and the process involving DBS checks. Members sought to understand what sectors agency staff were being employed in and questioned if this was in connection to services that experienced national shortages.

Councillor Alison Moore noted that good governance was a vital component to a successful organisation and therefore she said it was important that the Council delivered robust governance arrangements across the Council.

The Committee had the opportunity to consider and comment on the report. With respect to the implementation of agreed audit actions, the head of internal audit agreed to report on the arrangements being considered to encourage a higher implementation rate at the February 2022 Committee meeting.

Having considered the report the Committee:

Resolved

That the Committee noted the work completed to date on Internal Audit Q2 progress report - 1st July to 30th September 2021 as summarised in Appendix 1.

9. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2021-22 (Agenda Item 9):

The Head of Internal Audit introduced the report. The Audit Committee therefore received a full overview of the report and were requested to consider the report's recommendations.

The Committee had the opportunity to consider and comment on the report.

Having considered the report the Committee:

Resolved:

That the Committee approved the Internal Audit and Annual Plan for Q3 and Q4 of 2021-22 as highlighted in appendix A

10. CORPORATE ANTI-FRAUD TEAM (CAFT) (Agenda Item 10):

The Assistant Director Counter Fraud, Community Safety and Protection introduced the report and outlined the work that had taken place during the period 1st July – 30th September 2021. Members noted that the report represented an up-to-date picture of the work undertaken by Corporate Anti-Fraud Team (CAFT) during that time.

Having Considered the report the Audit Committee:

Resolved

That the Committee noted the CAFT Progress Report covering the period 1st July – 30th September 2021

11. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 RIPA POLICY AND GUIDANCE REVIEW (Agenda Item 11):

The Assistant Director Counter Fraud, Community Safety and Protection introduced the report.

Having Considered the report the Audit Committee:

Resolved

- That the Committee approved the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Policy and Guidance 2021
- That the Committee agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Assurance to make further amendments to the RIPA Policy Statement following consultation with the Chairman of the Audit Committee

12. WORK PROGRAMME (Agenda Item 11a):

Councillor Alison Moore made a request that an item on planning actions, affordable housing and viability assessments be added to the Committee's Work Programme. The Chairman suggested that this matter should have been presented to the Committee via a Members Item. Thereby giving all Committee members the Opportunity to consider the proposal and have a proper discussion during the Committee meeting.

Councillor Arjun Mittra seconded Councillor Moore's proposal.

The Chairman requested that the item be voted on.

For - 3
Against – 3
Abstention – 1

The Chairman used his casting vote and therefore the proposal moved by Councillor Alison Moore was lost.

Resolved

That the Committee work programme be noted.

13. ANY OTHER ITEM(S) THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT (Agenda Item 12):

None.

The meeting finished at 20:30