

CHILTERN DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting of the **AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE** held on **17 JANUARY 2018**

PRESENT: Councillor J Gladwin - Chairman

Councillors: A Bacon
C Jackson
V Martin
D Phillips
C Wertheim

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Councillors N Varley, R Jones and C Ford

30 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Audit & Standards Committee held on 27 September 2017 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

32 INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

Chris Harris took the Committee through the interim progress report and key points raised included:

1. The Committee was pleased to note that good progress had been made and the audit plan was on track to be completed on schedule.
2. A concern was raised that there had been significant delays between the date of some reports being issued and responses to these being received from the relevant officers. It was proposed that the Chairman contact the Management Team drawing this matter to their attention to raise with Heads of Service.
3. The Committee noted that the Waste Services – Health and Safety Review had been carried out as a pre-HSE inspection audit at the request of the Head of Environment. Members were advised that the Clay Lane Depot highlighted in the report as causing concern was owned by Wycombe District Council, therefore it did not fall under the Council's jurisdiction. The Committee were concerned that the site had consistently been deemed unsatisfactory and Members felt that WDC

should be encouraged to address the issues surrounding the site. It was proposed that the Chairman contact the Chairman of the Joint Waste Collection Committee to enquire as to a resolution to this issue and that the Chairman of WDC's Audit Committee also be notified.

4. Members were advised that the Waste Services contract with Biffa would end in 2021 and that work would begin in 2018 to explore options for a co-terminus end date with South Bucks District Council.

RESOLVED

That the Interim Progress Report be noted.

33 STRATEGIC PLAN 2018/19 TO 2020/21 AND ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2018/19

The Audit Strategic Plan 2018/19 to 2020/21 and the Annual Internal Audit Plan 2018/19 were presented to the meeting. Members were advised that the plan was subject to change based on the outcome of the audit work as it progressed throughout the year.

Members felt that a review of the Amersham Multi-Storey Car Park project at the conclusion of the construction should be included in the plan in order to assess outcome against budget and the impact on future revenues.

It was noted that the Legal department had never been audited as a separate entity, however the various functions carried out by the department had been included as part of other audits.

A concern was raised that Electoral Registration had not been audited in recent years. The Committee were advised that the need to audit the Electoral Registration team would be assessed to ascertain whether an audit was required.

It was noted that 342 days of audit work were planned for 2018/19, therefore there was some spare capacity should any further work be required.

RESOLVED

That the Strategic Plan 2018/19 and Annual Internal Audit Plan 2018/19 be noted.

34 FRAUD & CORRUPTION UPDATE

An update was provided to Members from Alistair Webb on fraud and corruption within the Council. The Committee were pleased to note that there were no fraud or corruption issues identified at a corporate level.

35 EY ANNUAL GRANT CERTIFICATION REPORT

Sue Gill of Ernst & Young presented the Certification of claims and returns annual report and the key points raised included in relation to Housing Benefit:

1. EY expressed their sincere thanks to the Council officers for their co-operation, with particular thanks given to the contribution of the Housing Benefits team for their hard work.
2. It was explained that claim samples were devised on a representative basis using sampling and the findings were extrapolated. The figure produced by this technique represented a £28,000 overpayment in the year 2016/17.
3. It was noted that the fee charged by EY was as originally estimated.

RESOLVED

That the EY Grant Certification Report be noted.

36 EY ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN

Members were advised that the Audit Plan for 2017/18 would be very similar to previous years, there was no change in risk or focus and no significant risks identified in value for money. The Committee noted the agreed fee listed on page 89 and it was explained that this was unlikely to change as an efficient audit was expected.

An update was given regarding the pension valuation work carried out by Barnett Waddingham. Members were advised that Barnett Waddingham's valuation methodology was considered an outlier against the work of other actuaries and there had been some concern regarding this. It was noted that Barnett Waddingham had agreed to share their methodology with PwC in order that the matter could be investigated further.

RESOLVED

That the EY Annual Audit Plan 2017/18 be noted.

37 AUDIT WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED

That the work programme of the Audit Committee be noted.

38 ANNUAL REVIEW OF CODE OF CONDUCT AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Committee considered a report which made recommendations to amend the Code of Conduct and Complaints procedure. Members were advised that a change had been made to the report removing a reference to the Local Government Ombudsman in the reasons for recommendation.

It was explained that clarification had been added to the code of conduct following complaints made around the declaration of personal interests. It was advised that Members who declared a personal interest were entitled to speak and vote on the item of business concerned. It was noted that only in cases of a prejudicial interest being declared would Members be required to withdraw from a meeting.

Members noted the proposed changes in the format of the complaints form for the public and that the new arrangements included details about the investigation and hearing procedures, so that all the relevant information for the complainant and subject member was contained in one reference document.

RESOLVED

1. That arrangements for dealing with complaints be revised as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.
2. That the revised assessment criteria at Appendix 3, Annex 3 be agreed.
3. That the proposed procedure for Hearing Committees at Appendix 3, Annexes 5 and 6 be agreed.

And further

RECOMMENDED to Full Council that the code of conduct be amended to clarify that a member who declares a personal interest is still entitled to speak and vote on an item of business.

39 REVIEW OF MEMBER TRAINING IN 2017

The Committee noted the training provided to Members over the past year and were asked to consider and agree the areas and topics for training on standards in the coming year. Members were advised that due to the increased use of external borrowing by local authorities and an increase in commercial activity, it may be beneficial to offer training to raise Members awareness around the revised Prudential Code and risk management issues in the longer term.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the position on Member training in 2017 be noted.**
- 2. That training on the Prudential Code be arranged for Members in 2018.**

40 STANDARDS WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED

That the work programme of the Standards Committee be noted.

41 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND RIPA ANNUAL REPORT

Members were presented with a report which detailed the public engagement with the Freedom of Information Act and RIPA. The Committee noted that the number of Freedom of Information requests had increased year on year and that 87% of requests were responded to within the allotted time frame. It was advised that a large proportion of requests related to Business Support originating from Commercial Businesses. In relation to the RIPA regulations, it was noted that the Council had not carried out any form of surveillance for a number of years.

RESOLVED

That the Freedom of Information Management and RIPA Annual Report be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.58 pm