

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2022 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. McGarvey (Chairman)

Cllr. Morris (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Barnes, Chughtai, London, Morris, Osborne-Jackson, Pender and Williamson

Mo Chughtai was also present

Cllr. Dickins was also present via a virtual media platform that did not constitute attendance as recognised by the Local Government Act 1972.

15. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2022 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

16. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

17. Actions from Previous Meeting

The actions were noted.

18. Responses of the Council, Cabinet or Council Committees to the Committee's reports or recommendations

There were none.

19. Audit Committee Member Development - Understanding Local Government Accounts

The Head of Finance gave a presentation and briefed Members on Understanding Local Government Accounts.

Resolved: That the Members Development be noted.

20. Members Allowance Scheme Monitoring

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which outlined Members' allowances claimed during the 2021/22 year. Two Members had elected not to receive the full basic allowance. Travel expenses were claimed by 18 out of 54 members, which

Audit Committee - 22 September 2022

was consistent with previous years. The Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) were expected to address the Council within the financial year.

The Committee discussed the JIRP, and heard that Members could present comments to them should they have any issues they wanted to raise. They further discussed the breakdown of individual Members' expenses. It was moved and duly seconded that the individual Councillor allowance and expense payments for the previous year be included in the report in the future. The motion was put to the vote, and it was

Resolved: That

- a) the individual Councillor allowance and expense payments for the previous year be included in the Members' allowance scheme monitoring reports in the future; and
- b) the contents of the report be noted.

21. Internal Audit Progress Report 2022/23

The Audit Manager presented the report which outlined the progress and findings of the Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22. Members heard that 3 vacancies and instances of long-term absence within the Audit team had delayed delivery of the plan, and that the audits laid out in the report would be ready for the next meeting of the Committee.

The Audit Manager further explained the impact of these resourcing issues on the Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23. She explained that a reduction in the number of medium priority audits was necessary to ensure the successful delivery of the overall plan.

The Committee discussed the problems surrounding recruitment, and the Audit Manager advised the committee that she was working with Senior Management and Dartford Borough Council to address the issue.

Resolved: That

- a) the report be noted; and
- b) the reduction in the Audit Plan be agreed.

22. Strategic Risk Register

The Audit Manager presented the report which outlined the most recent version of the Strategic Risk Register. The Property Investment Risk had been removed as the scheme was no longer undertaken by the Council following changes in legislation. The Covid-19 Risk was kept due to its ongoing impact on Council Operations. She explained that scores had either reduced or remained the same since March, and that actions were in place to reduce the scores of risks that were above their target.

Audit Committee - 22 September 2022

In response to questions from the Committee, the Chief Officer - Finance and Trading advised the Committee that the Property team that had previously dealt with property investment were now spending more time on the Council approved Capital Programme.

Resolved: That the contents of the Strategic Risk Register be considered and noted.

23. Work Plan

The Work Plan was noted.

In response to questions, the Audit Manager explained that key policies came to the Audit Committee for review on a cyclical basis, to ensure they are up to date.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.58 PM

CHAIRMAN