

MINUTES
AUDIT COMMITTEE
20 MARCH 2024

Present:

Councillors: Stewart (Chair)
Douris
Elliot
S Hobson

Officers: F Jump Head of Financial Services
D Barrett Assistant Director, Strategic Housing and Delivery
N Sultan Legal Governance Manager
T Angel Democratic Support Officer

Others: Philip Lazenby (TIAA)
Paul Cuttle (Grant Thornton)
Chris Paisley (KPMG)

The meeting began at 7.25 pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Birnie and Councillor Reynolds.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES AND ACTIONS

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

All action points from the previous meeting had been completed and members were content with the responses.

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

5 HOMES ENGLAND COMPLIANCE AUDIT REPORT

David Barrett introduced the item and advised the purpose of the report was to provide the outcome of the Homes England Compliance Audit.

Please refer to the video minutes for full discussion.

Outcome

The audit report and its recommendation were acknowledged and signed off by Audit Committee, and confirmation of this acknowledgement recorded in the Homes England Investment Management System.

6 INDICATIVE EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2023-24

Chris Paisley introduced the report and presented the indicative External Audit Plan and Strategy for the year ending 31st March 2024.

Please refer to the video minutes for full discussion.

Outcome

The committee noted the plan.

7 EXTERNAL AUDITORS INTERIM ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Paul Cuttle introduced the item and presented the External Auditor's annual report for 2022/23.

Please refer to the video minutes for full discussion.

Outcome

1. The committee accepted the External Auditor's Interim Annual Report 2022/23, noting the recommendations within the report.
2. The committee noted the status of the External Auditor's audit the 2022/23 financial statements, which awaits assurance from the auditor of the Hertfordshire County Council Pension Fund, and the expectation of the issues on an unqualified audit opinion on the Council's 2022/23 financial statements.

8 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT ANNUAL UPDATE

Nargis Sultan introduced the item and advised the purpose of the report was to inform the Audit Committee of the Council's use of Directed Surveillance and Covert Human Intelligence Sources for the year 2023.

Please refer to the video minutes for full discussion.

Outcome

The committee noted the report and agreed that no further changes to the RIPA policy were required.

9 STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROL ASSURANCE REPORT

Philip Lazenby introduced the report and provided the committee with a progress update against the annual internal audit plan.

Please refer to the video minutes for full discussion.

Outcome

1. The committee noted the final internal audit reports issued for following Council activities: Key Financial Controls-Income Collection, Community Grants, and Risk Management Framework.
2. The committee noted the content of the SICA and progress against the annual internal audit plan.

Action

F Jump to circulate Diane Southam's response to the OEM Action Plan (on page 64 of the agenda)

10 **INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2024-25**

Fiona Jump and Philip Lazenby presented the proposed Annual Audit Plan, Strategy and Charter 2024/25 for Audit Committee, and asked for comment or feedback from members.

Please refer to the video minutes for full discussion.

Outcome

1. The committee reviewed and approved the Annual Audit plan 2024/25 at Appendix A of the agenda.
2. The committee approved the Internal Audit Charter at Appendix A of the agenda.

11 **QUESTIONS FROM THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR TO AUDIT COMMITTEE – RISK OF FRAUD**

Fiona Jump advised the purpose of the report was to present the proposed response to questions posed to Audit Committee from the External Audit concerning risk of fraud.

Please refer to the video minutes for full discussion.

Outcome

The committee approved the proposed responses to the External Auditor's questions at Appendix A of the agenda.

Action

F Jump to monitor progress on members completing the Related Party Transaction Declaration Forms.

12 **STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER Q3 2023-24**

Fiona Jump introduced the report and provided the committee with an update against the risks identified in the Council's Strategic Risk Register as at Q3 2023-24.

Please refer to the video minutes for full discussion.

Outcome

The committee noted the report.

13 **WORK PROGRAMME**

There were no amendments to the work programme.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 24 July 2024.

The Meeting ended at 8.43 pm