

DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

21 November 2018

Present:

Councillors: Taylor (Chairman)
Birnie Silwal
Douris Tindall

Also Attended: Councillor Elliot, Portfolio Holder for Finance & Resources.

Officers: J Deane Corporate Director (Finance and Operations)
N Howcutt Assistant Director (Finance & Resources)
F Jump Group Manager (Financial Services)
S Desor Interim Financial Accountant
L Warden Group Manager (Tenants & Leaseholders)
J Doyle Group Manager (Democratic Services)
M Sells Corporate & Democratic Support Officer

Others: M Towler Mazars
S Ironmonger Grant Thornton
A Conlan Grant Thornton

The meeting began at 7.30 pm

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor G.Elliot

The Chair welcomed the group and informed them that Andy Conlan will be leaving, He thanked him for his service on behalf of all the Members of the committee.

Amber Banister will be attending the next meeting as his successor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Douris rental of a commercial DBC garage by a company he has an interest in

3. MINUTES AND ACTIONS (Agenda Item 3)

Councillor Tindall – in relation to Item 72 Cllr Tindall enquired as to whether the report mentioned at the end of item 72 had been circulated. The chair apologised that this hadn't been completed, Nigel Howcutt confirmed the report would be circulated after the meeting.

Councillor Douris asked for confirmation that the Action Schedule would be added to the minutes going forward as per the discussion at the last meeting.

The Chair confirmed that going forward all actions points will be collated and presented in table format in the minutes under "Minutes and Actions"

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2018 were agreed by the members present and signed by the Chairman.

Actions of the meeting

MEETING DATE	TASK / ACTION	ACTIONER	DEADLINE	STATUS
21-Nov-18	Update on whether DBC incurred fines from the ombudsman- (in Relation to item 72)	Nigel Howcott	06/02/19	Email circulated 29/11/2018
21-Nov-18	An outstanding Report on FOI responses.	TBC	06/02/19	
21-Nov-18	Amber Banister - Name plate to be made	Marie sells	06/02/19	
21-Nov-18	Section 106 and CIL handbook to be sent to all Members	Councillor Taylor	06/02/19	
21-Nov-18	New property & Place manager to be added to the distribution list	Marie Sells	06/02/19	
21-Nov-18	Enhanced KPIs to be circulated to Members	F.Williamson	06/02/19	

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Agenda Item 4)

There was no public participation.

5. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER – REVIEW#

James Deane provided a verbal update to the group.

There was a review of the Risk Register undertaken as advised during the meeting on 18 September 2018, this included Chief Officers, Cabinet and the Opposition.

As part of the review, Members were asked to provide any concerns they may have, the information was collected and the first draft is being prepared to send to Mazars.

The results of this review will be available at the next Audit Meeting in February 2019.

6. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Item C6, Councillor Tindal enquired as to whether it would be possible for the updates regarding recruitment to be detailed on the report so that the Audit committee can keep track of how this risk is progressing. J.Deane confirmed this would be a priority.

Item C6, Councillor Douris requested confirmation of the areas in which DBC are struggling to recruit.

J.Deane confirmed these are: Finance, Environmental Health, Planning and Building Control, this is mainly due to DBCs proximity to London and the competition with other local Authorities & the private sector.

Item I3 (page 15 of 18) Councillor Douris would like clarification regarding CIL and how the funds can be used. The Chair will ensure a Handbook is sent to all Members which will provide further information on Section 106 and CIL.

7. EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Andy Conlan provided a verbal update to the Group

Work is ongoing but there is little to report at the moment, the annual certification letter will be reported in December and more information will be provided in the February Audit Meeting

Councillor Douris enquired as to whether there were any issues that were causing concern, A.Conlan confirmed DBC is a low risk organisation without any major concerns.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

Mark Towler provided a verbal update to the Group.

Steady progress has been made with 4 reports finalised and a further 5 either planned or in progress. There are an additional 5 reports which are yet to commence. Everything is running to schedule.

All recommendations from the previous year have been followed up and implemented with 5 recommendations outstanding from the current year, however the date for the implementation has not yet been reached.

Councillor Douris raised concerns regarding the number of reports still to be completed and the limited time left in order to do them.

M.Towler reassures the group they are on schedule and all the work will be completed on time.

9. INTERNAL AUDIT: SERVICE REPORT

Commercial Asset Management (Garages) Report

3 recommendations were given:

- Roles and responsibilities within the department - Priority 2
- Updating procedure for repairs - Priority 2
- KPIs - Priority 3

Councillor Tindall is concerned that the number of departments and people who are involved in the process could cause confusion, he is hoping these new recommendation will provide direction and clarity within the process.

J.Deane understands the concern however he feels this is not the case, part of the management objectives are to make capital receipts from the sale of garage sites and to increase revenue, however the decisions have been made against a number of different criteria including the level of anti-social behaviour, the level of occupancy, the cost of repairs, the developability of the sites and ability to decant current tenants into neighbouring sites. The overall strategy aims to produce a more efficient use of garage stock by consolidating all the vacancies and selling off those sites, in his view there are no conflicting objectives.

F.Williamson explained the auditors concerns are more focused on the operational level and the sharing of information, all of which are being monitored.

Councillor Tindall would like to know what assurances can be made to ensure unnecessary repairs are not being made to garage sites which are then sold on.

F.Williamson confirmed there are safeguards in place to ensure investment is put into sites which have demand and aren't within the strategy as well as those which will provide the highest income. No repairs have been made to garages which are going to be sold within the next 12 months.

Councillor Douris would like to know if there is a way of distinguishing between Council owned garages and those which are privately owned.

F.Williamson confirmed that a possible agreed colour scheme is being looked into.

F.Williamson will distribute the enhanced list of KPIs to Members

A new property and place manager has been appointed and should be included on the distribution list going forward.

10. Audit committee work Programme

The 19/20 internal Audit plan will be presented at the February meeting.

The meeting ended at 20:20