

CIVIC AFFAIRS

25 November 2020

5.30 - 7.07 pm

Present: Councillors Sargeant (Chair), Davey (Vice-Chair), Chadwick, Dalzell, O'Reilly and Thornburrow

Officers:

Interim Chief Executive: Andrew Grant

Head of Finance: Caroline Ryba

Head of Shared Internal Audit Service: Jonathan Tully

Deputy Head of Finance: Jody Etherington

Democratic Services Manager: Gary Clift

Meeting Producer: Liam Martin

Others Present:

Ernst & Young External Auditor: Suresh Patel

Ernst & Young External Auditor: Tony Poynton

Independent Person: Rob Bennett

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**20/32/Civ Apologies**

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Thornburrow

20/33/Civ Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

20/34/Civ Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 28 May, 4 June and 8 July were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20/35/Civ Public Questions

There were no public questions.

20/36/Civ Officer Delegated Decisions**5a Implementation of Pay Awards**

The decisions were noted.

20/37/Civ Annual Governance Statement and Local Code of Corporate Governance

The Committee received a report presenting the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2019/2020, and the Local Code of Corporate Governance. The report detailed the annual review of effectiveness, provided updates on the progress from the previous year, communicated any new governance issues, and provided an update of the Local Code of Corporate Governance. The committee noted that although the report covered to end of March 2020, there was mention on the impact of coronavirus on page 40.

Resolved (5-0) to:

- i. Approve the Annual Governance Statement in advance of the Statement of Accounts. To help complete this, members noted:
 - a. the arrangements for compiling, reporting on and signing the AGS;
 - b. the progress made on issues reported in the previous year;
 - c. the current review of effectiveness
 - d. the issues considered for inclusion in the current AGS;
- ii. Note and endorse the amendments to the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance

20/38/Civ Internal Audit Plan: Progress Report

The Committee received a report from the Head of Internal Audit regarding the work of Internal Audit, completed between April and October 2020.

The Head of Internal Audit said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. There are checks on how the statutory and discretionary coronavirus grants to business are being allocated and there will be on-going work to check for fraud.
- ii. Thanked members and the Independent Person for noting the work of the team in ensuring the improvements made on gas compliance safety. It was expected that the move from spreadsheets to Orchard Asset System would be mid 2021.
- iii. Expected that the Carbon Management data quality work would commence next month.

Resolved (5-0) to:

- i. Note the contents of the report.

20/39/Civ Ernst and Young Annual Audit Letter

The Committee received a report from Deputy Head of Finance/Ernst & Young regarding the Annual Audit Letter, which summarised the key issues arising from the 2018/19 audit.

The Committee noted that External Auditors were lobbying the Government that sign-off of local authority accounts for 2020/21 be completed by 30 September 2021.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- i. Note the contents of the Annual Audit Letter.

20/40/Civ Statement of Accounts 2019/20

The committee received a report from the Deputy Head of Finance regarding the external audit of the Statement of Accounts which was still underway. However, there had been very good progress made and in a much shorter timescale to that experienced for the 2018/19 accounts. Both officers and the External Auditors emphasised the quality of the paperwork, responsiveness of team members on both sides, despite remote working. Members commented that the fact that the work had been turned around much more quickly this year was to be commended and were suitable assured, the Committee thanked the Finance Team and EY for the work undertaken to get to this point. The recommendations were written in a way if there were any major issues the matters would be brought back to committee.

Resolved (6-0) to:

- i. Receive the Audit Results Report presented by EY.
- ii. Approve the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2020, subject to any remaining amendments per recommendation iii.
- iii. Delegate authority to the Chair, in consultation with the Opposition Spokes, to approve any amendments to the Statement of Accounts arising from remaining audit procedures, provided that these do not have a material impact on the Council's reserves or result in any changes to the auditor's opinion.
- iv. Authorise the Chair of the meeting to sign the Letter of Representation and Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2020 on behalf of the Council.

20/41/Civ Freedom Of Information, Data Protection And Transparency: Annual Report 2019/20

The Committee received a report from the Data Protection Officer & Information Governance Manager which provided an update on information governance activity and performance during 2019/20 (April 2019 – March 2020).

The Strategic Director responded to Members' questions about cyber security and the home working environment (ie. since most staff were now home working). The Committee noted that there was on-going training programmes to reflect the changed working environment for the majority of workers, amongst other measures including updates and guidance on the Council's intranet..

Resolved (6-0) to:

- i. Note the contents of the report.

20/42/Civ Calendar of Meetings 2021/22

It was noted following the discussion on 20/39/Civ, that the dates for Civic Affairs Committee may need to change when there is greater certainty.

Resolved (6-0) to:

- i. Approve the meetings calendar 2021/22.
- ii. Agree to change the date of Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee from 12 April to 29 March 2021 as explained in the report.
- iii. Agree to cancel the April 2021 Council meeting for the reasons outlined in the report.

The meeting ended at 7.07 pm

CHAIR