

CIVIC AFFAIRS

20 November 2013

6.00pm - 6.55 pm

Present: Councillors Rosenstiel (Chair), Cantrill (Vice-Chair), Benstead, Herbert, Johnson and Pitt

Officers present:

Chief Executive: Antoinette Jackson

Director of Resources: David Horspool

Head of Internal Audit: Steve Crabtree

Head of Legal Services: Simon Pugh

Democratic Services Manager: Gary Clift

Committee Manager: Glenn Burgess

Director of Ernst & Young (External Auditors) – Mark Hodgson

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

13/56/CIV Apologies for absence

No apologies were received.

13/57/CIV Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2013 were signed as a correct record by the Chair.

13/58/CIV Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

13/59/CIV Public Questions

There were no public questions.

13/60/CIV Annual Audit Letter 2012/13

The committee received a report from the Director of Ernst and Young regarding the Annual Audit Letter 2012/13.

Members briefly discussed the content of the report.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- i. Note the report.

13/61/CIV Internal Audit Plan: Progress Report

The committee received a progress report from the Head of Internal Audit regarding the Internal Audit Plan. It was highlighted that Managers had been very receptive to recent audit reports and were proactively implementing actions and identifying savings where possible.

In response to Members' questions the Head of Internal Audit and the Director of Resources said the following:

- i. Contracts and projects within the report listed as 'watching brief' were those where preventative, rather than specific audit work, was being undertaken. Audit retained a role in the Project Boards and provided advice to guide the process.
- ii. Referring to the table on page 38 of the agenda:
 - 5 actions had been listed as 'overdue' for 2013/14. Since the report had been written 2 of these had now been completed and work on the remaining 3 was progressing.
 - 18 actions had been listed as 'overdue' for 2011/12. A number of these had slipped due to changes in legislation and as a result of departmental restructures, but were now progressing well.
- iii. The National Fraud Initiative (NFI) was set up in 1996 to match electronic data within and between public and private sector bodies to prevent and detect fraud. Data sets were cross checked with discrepancies being highlighted and reported back for further investigation. Early in the process a large number of inaccuracies were highlighted which helped identify areas on which to concentrate audit work and that of the fraud team.

- iv. Internal Audit had been fully involved with the recent changes to the Council's budgetary process and had found them to be robust. A watching brief would be maintained as they were now being implemented.
- v. Internal Audit had concentrated on the 'project management' element of the Mercury Abatement Project. Internal Audit had not looked at the 'value for money' element.

Councillor Cantrill highlighted that in previous years a 'categorisation' section had been included in the summary position tables (as at page 38 of the agenda).

The committee requested that this be reinstated for the 2014/15 progress report.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- i. Note progress against the original plan together with the associated assurance levels established.
- ii. Progress against implementation of agreed actions.
- iii. Request the inclusion of a 'categorisation' section in summary position tables for future reports.

13/62/CIV Municipal Year 2014/15

The committee received a report from the Democratic Services Manager regarding the Municipal Year 2014/15. It was noted that, as the first day of the school summer holiday was 24 July 2014, the Liberal Democrat Group Leader had suggested moving the Council meeting back one day to Wednesday 23 July 2014. The committee felt that meeting one day into the school holiday would not cause a significant problem to the majority of Councillors and agreed to retain the date of Thursday 24 July 2014.

It was also noted that, as the timetable for political party conferences had changed meaning they will be in a different order from normal, the September/October scrutiny cycle would be affected. It was therefore proposed that Council be held on 6 November - after the school half term break, instead of before.

Councillors Herbert and Benstead suggested that all Councillors be consulted on their views. It was felt that those without school age children may choose the week after half term to take their own holidays and a better option for the meeting may be 13 November.

The Chief Executive highlighted the importance of agreeing the meetings calendar as soon as possible. Concern was raised about a consultation process for the November meeting and how a consensus would be arrived at.

The committee suggested that the meetings calendar be agreed subject to the date of November Council being approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with Chair and Spokes having consulted all councillors via Group Leaders/Group Chairs. It was agreed that Councillors would be consulted on both the 6 and 13 November and the date with the most support would be agreed.

Scheduling the Annual Meeting in May 2015 outside of school half term was also unlikely. As the elections (including the general election) will be on 7 May, the Civic Affairs Committee would need to meet on the Monday following the elections to enable the Annual Council meeting to take place in the week before half term. Members indicated that it would not be possible to hold Group Meetings in the weekend immediately following the election to inform the Civic Affairs Committee's recommendations to Council. The Committee agreed to defer a decision on the date of the Annual Meeting to allow for further consideration of the options.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- i) Agree the meetings calendar up until 30 April 2015 - subject to the date of November Council being approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with Chair and Spokes (after consultation with all Members).
- ii) Agree the schedule for the Annual Meeting in May 2015 at a future meeting - after consultation with Group Leaders and Group Chairs.

The meeting ended at 6.55 pm

CHAIR