

CIVIC AFFAIRS

17 February 2016

6.00 - 7.45 pm

Present: Councillors McPherson (Chair), Benstead (Vice-Chair), Cantrill, Holt, Robertson and Sinnott

Officers present:

Chief Executive: Antoinette Jackson

Head of Legal Services: Simon Pugh

Head of Finance: Caroline Ryba

Head of Internal Audit: Steve Crabtree

Head of Human Resources: Deborah Simpson

Benefits Manager: Naomi Armstrong

Electoral Services Manager: Vicky Breeding

Democratic Services Manager: Gary Clift

Committee Manager: Sarah Steed

Others Present

Assistant Manager Ernst & Young: Tony Poynton

Independent Person: Sean Brady

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

16/53/CIV Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Rob Bennett the Deputy Independent Person.

16/54/CIV Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

16/55/CIV Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the inclusion of the Officers that were present.

16/56/CIV Public Questions

There were no public questions.

16/57/CIV External Audit 2015/16 Audit Plan

The committee received a report from the Head of Finance and Ernst and Young detailing the Audit Plan from Ernst and Young which summarised their approach to the audit of the financial statements and the value for money conclusion for 2015/16.

In response to members' questions the Assistant Manager of Ernst & Young and the Head of Finance said the following:

- i. If the Housing Company was started up, this may change the scope of the profit and loss audit approach.
- ii. The Auditors would review the financial statements that were provided to them to see if they were accurate.
- iii. Whilst working with other authorities the Council's Finance Department would undertake normal financial procedures and report against budgets. There would be reliance on internal financial controls for audit purposes.
- iv. For services that were being delivered through alternative methods for example the Cultural Trust (being an arm's length company) the Auditors would be interested in the nature of the relationship of this organisation with the Council. For example if the organisation was totally owned by the City Council or whether it was a separate organisation.
- v. An arm's length organisation would have to appoint their own external Auditors.
- vi. The Principal Accountant (Technical & Financial Accounting) was looking at the Council's relationship with the Destination Management Trust (DMO) and the Cultural Trust before pulling the accounts together so that there was an agreed approach for how to deliver the accounts.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- i. Note the contents of the external audit plan.

16/58/CIV External Audit Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report 2014/15

The committee received a report which presented the Certification of claims and returns annual report by Ernst and Young, the Council's external auditor.

In response to members' questions the Benefits Manager said the following:

- i. As part of the audit process, the Council had to assure the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) that the Council is trying to reduce errors in the payment of benefits. The Benefits section is in the process of recruiting a Compliance Officer who will undertake specific subsidy related monitoring for the classification of overpayment subsidy and income assessment. Areas for Officer training have also been identified. Managers are also regularly setting aside time to undertake checks for work that has been undertaken the previous day.
- ii. Where a benefit underpayment was identified the correct payment would be paid to the claimant as soon as possible.
- iii. If there had been a local authority error in the overpayment of a benefit payment, the authority would look to see whether the claimant would have been aware of the error and the individual's circumstances would also be considered before a decision was made as to whether to pursue the overpayment or if the overpayment should be written off.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- i. Note the contents of Ernst and Young's report as attached at Appendix 1 of the Officer's report.

16/59/CIV Internal Audit Plan & Strategy 2016 / 2017

The committee received a report which presented the draft Internal Audit Annual Plan and Strategy for 2016/17. The plan had been subject to a consultation with all Directorates, the Chief Executive and a copy had been shared with the Council's external auditors Ernst and Young.

In response to members' questions the Head of Internal Audit and the Head of Finance said the following:

- i. With reference to audit objective 4 'Investing in improving transport' on p65 of the agenda pack the reviews in relation to the City Deal would be undertaken by the County Council to avoid duplicate effort. The City Council Audit Team would have regular access to their reports.
- ii. With reference to audit objective 6 also on p65 of the agenda pack 'Protecting essential services and transforming Council delivery', Shared Services: Phase 1, a post implementation review would be undertaken which would look at whether for example whether the shared services or the cultural trust was delivering what it set out to achieve.

- iii. When an audit was undertaken on shared services, the focus was on the governance side of transactions rather than the financial transaction itself.
- iv. For services delivered through alternative mechanisms the Audit Team would look at whether there was appropriate monitoring internally and whether there was anything that needed to be changed.
- v. Finance would be involved in the coordination of financial transactions but would not undertake audit checks.
- vi. Extensive consultation had been undertaken with Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Service on the audit plan. They felt that the audit had a comprehensive coverage and as it would be kept under review, if something did emerge then the work plan would be reviewed as appropriate.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- i. Approve the draft Audit Plan and Strategy for adoption and
- ii. Note the internal documents on Internal Audit provision – the Audit Charter – as identified in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

16/60/CIV Implementation of Internal Audit Recommendations

The committee received a report which provided an updated position on overdue Internal Audit actions.

In response to members' questions the Head of Internal Audit said he was confident that steps had now been put in place to ensure that audit actions would be monitored and managed effectively.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- i. Note the progress made on the implementation of Internal Audit agreed actions.

16/61/CIV Update on Individual Electoral Registration

The committee received a report which provided an update on the effect of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) following the end of the transition period in December 2015.

In response to members' questions the Electoral Services Manager said the following:

- i. If the European referendum was held this year the final date to be able to register to vote in the election would be 12 working days before the election date. A timetable for key dates for the election would be circulated to members once a date had been confirmed.
- ii. The wards mostly affected by the change in the registration system were Market, Newnham and Petersfield. Trumpington ward had had a lot of development recently and this would explain changes to the numbers of registered electors.
- iii. The process to verify an individual before they could be added on to the electoral register can take time this might explain why these individuals did not appear on the copy of the Electoral Register held by Members.
- iv. The Electoral Register was a fluid document and would regularly have individuals being added or taken off. A printed version of the register would only provide a snapshot of information for when the register was printed.
- v. There were 8864 students registered on the Electoral Register which equated to approximately 74%, it was not always easy to encourage students to apply to be on the electoral roll as students did not always live in student accommodation.
- vi. Internal Audit had looked at how the individual electoral registration (IER) process had been set in the Council.
- vii. The Electoral Services Manager was working with a group of Elections Officers in partnership with the Cabinet Office to see if there were any ways in which elections procedures could be improved for the next general election.

Resolved (unanimously) to:

- i. Note the current registration situation in Cambridge, along with the work already carried out and that which is planned in the lead up to the May 2016 City Council and Police & Crime Commissioner elections.

16/62/CIV Pay Policy Statement 2016/17

The committee received a report from the Head of Human Resources which set out a draft Pay Policy Statement as required under the Localism Act.

In response to members' questions the Head of Human Resources said the following:

- i. The Council's pay scale consisted partly of the national pay scale and was partly locally determined pay grades. The Council has chosen to use pay scales 1-9 and the Chief Executive and Directors had a separate pay scale.

- ii. It was identified under the current payment structure that for some shared services roles there was no pay scale which was appropriate for the job. Therefore it was suggested that an additional pay scale 10 was introduced.
- iii. The Council had a rolling target for the number of apprenticeships that it was able to offer; currently the Council had 8 apprentices and were looking to recruit to 9.

Resolved (unanimously)

- i. To recommend to Council the draft Pay Policy Statement 2016/17 attached as Appendix 1 to the Officers report.
- ii. Noted that a review of senior officers salaries had been undertaken in 2015 and that no change to pay levels of the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service on JNC1 and JNC2 were recommended as a result of the review.
- iii. To recommend to Council to delegate authority to the Head of Human Resources to implement the new Band 10.
- iv. To note the position on the chief officer pay award and received an update at the meeting.
- v. To recommend to Council to delegate authority to the Head of Human Resources to update the Pay Policy Statement 2016/17 should a Chief Executive and / or Chief Officer pay award be agreed.

16/63/CIV Constitutional Changes, For Council Meetings, Procedure Rules, Amending the Constitution / Terms of Reference, For Review of Local Democratic Engagement.

The committee received a report from the Head of Legal Services which sought approval for changes to the Council Procedure Rules to better manage the time spent at council meetings, agreement to the Terms of Reference for a review of local democratic engagement and approval for the Monitoring Officer to make routine changes to the Constitution to keep it up to date.

The Independent Person requested that as part of the review of local democratic engagement the use of social media was taken into consideration as part of this process

In response to members' questions, the Democratic Services Manager said that the Council was looking to film the next Full Council meeting as a pilot exercise.

Councillor Cantrill proposed additional text to recommendation 2.4 (additional text underlined):

To recommend to Council the changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 2 to allow the Monitoring Officer to keep the Constitution Updated. The Monitoring Officer would also keep Members informed of changes to the Constitution.

On a show of hands the additional text was agreed unanimously.

The amended recommendations were put to the vote:

Resolved (unanimously):

Constitution changes:

- i. To recommend to Council the changes to Council Procedure Rules as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer's report.
- ii. That the Committee review the effect of these changes in Spring 2017.

Motion on public engagement in local democracy:

- iii. To agree a member working party with terms of reference, composition and delivery timetable as set out in paragraphs 4.2 to 4.3

Updating the Constitution

- iv. To recommend to Council the changes to the Constitution as set out in Appendix 2 to allow the Monitoring Officer to keep the Constitution Updated. The Monitoring Officer would also keep Members informed of changes to the Constitution.

16/64/CIV Localism Act 2011 and Standards of Conduct: Appointment of "Independent Person" and Deputy

The committee received a report from the Head of Legal Services on the appointment of the Independent Person and Deputy as required under the Localism Act 2011.

In response to members' questions the Head of Legal Services said the following:

- i. The two individuals currently appointed to the posts of Independent and Deputy Independent Person were of a very high quality and had been very good in their role to date.

- ii. When the positions were advertised previously, there had been no female applicants.

Resolved (unanimously):

- i. To recommend to Council to extend the appointment of Sean Brady and Robert Bennett as the Council's Independent Person and Deputy for a term of two years until the end of February 2018.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm

CHAIR