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Civic Affairs

Civ/1

Wednesday, 13 July 2022

CIVIC AFFAIRS

13 July 2022
5.30 - 6.10 pm

Present: Councillors Bennett, Davey (Chair), Hauk, Moore and Thornburrow

Officers:

Head of Finance: Caroline Ryba

Head of Shared Internal Audit Service: Jonathan Tully

Human Resources: Addy Donnelly

Committee Manager: James Goddard

Others Present:

Ernst & Young Representative: Jacob McHugh

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

22/20/Civ Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Carling and McPherson. Also Rob Bennett (Independent Person).

Councillor Moore attended as an Alternate Councillor.

The Committee Manager took the Chair whilst the Civic Affairs Committee elected a Chair.

Councillor Thornburrow proposed, and Councillor Moore seconded, the nomination of Councillor Davey as Chair.

Unanimously resolved that Councillor Davey be Chair for the meeting.

Councillor Davey took over as Chair of the meeting.

22/21/Civ Declarations of Interest

Item	Councillor	Interest
22/24/Civ	Davey	Personal: Sat on Board of Cambridge Investment Partnership.

22/22/Civ Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 May and 26 May 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22/23/Civ Public Questions

There were no public questions.

22/24/Civ External Audit Plan for 2021/22

The Committee received an Initial Audit Plan 2021/22 from Ernst & Young LLP summarising the proposed approach to the 2021/22 external audit, including a consideration of the most significant audit risks.

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

- i. Ernst & Young would review if the City Council would be able to operate (financially) effectively due to risks/pressures such as inflation. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) due to be reported in autumn 2022 would set out figures for the next five years. Inflation did impact on City Council operating costs and the MTFS would comment on this.
- ii. Cipfa were looking at how to provide guidance on the infrastructure accounting issue (referred to in the covering report 4.2) and the plan itself in the risk section.

The Ernst & Young Officer said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. The reference to "Effects of climate related matters on financial statements and Value for Money arrangements" on report P9 was standard wording and did not relate to any specific concerns.
- ii. Payroll was normally a low risk, but mentioned in the Ernst & Young report as the Council had moved to a new system so the situation was being monitored as part of standard practice. There were no specific concerns.
- iii. Council stock valuation work had not been undertaken in the reporting period so there were no comments in the Ernst & Young report.
- iv. The Council had a lot of infrastructure assets. It was difficult to add/subtract spend on these in the asset register eg £X amount of piping replaced by £Y amount of piping. Ernst & Young tried to quantify this on the balance sheet for accounting purposes.

Unanimously resolved to note the contents of the EY Initial Audit Plan 2021/22.

The Chair asked for the minutes to show the Committees' formal thanks to Jody Etherington as Deputy Head of Finance.

22/25/Civ Whistleblowing Policy

The Committee received a report from the Head of Shared Internal Audit Service, and the HR Business Partner, regarding the Whistleblowing policy.

Counter fraud policies were part of the Council's internal controls, which contribute to maintaining good governance.

The Council maintains a Prevention of Fraud and Corruption (PFC) Policy, and in line with good practice it is reported annually to this Committee. This establishes and communicates our Counter Fraud Framework.

The Whistleblowing Policy supports the Counter Fraud Framework, and the Council have reviewed this Policy to ensure it is up to date and reflects good professional practice.

The Head of Shared Internal Audit Service, and the HR Business Partner, said the following in response to Members' questions:

- i. It was hard to measure the culture of the Council in the context of Whistleblowing, as there are many variables. People seemed willing to 'whistle blow' which demonstrates awareness of the policy, as well as reporting issues to their line manager which is a positive culture. Once the policy was issued, tools such as surveys would be used to gauge how it was received and understood.
- ii. The Whistle Blowing Policy was for employees to use. If someone outside the organisation wished to raise issues, then they could use the complaints procedure. If an issue was reported the wrong way, it would be redirected. The Whistle Blowing Policy reflects the Public Interest Disclosure Act.
- iii. The Whistle Blowing Policy had gone through 'clear English' assessment software.
- iv. Meta data was used in the Whistle Blowing Policy to assist with web searches for the various terminology used.

Action Point: Undertook to follow up after meeting to enquire if it was possible to provide an obvious button on the internet and intranet sites

to change the displayed language from English to another to make it more accessible for people who did not use English as their first language.

Action Point: Head of Shared Internal Audit Service and HR Business Partner undertook to report progress back to next committee.

- v. There was no right of appeal to the Whistle Blowing Policy. The policy set out how people could proceed if they were dissatisfied with outcomes e.g., speak to prescribed bodies and the Whistleblowing Charity Protect.
- vi. The Whistle Blowing Policy was publicised in various ways such as through the intranet and induction packs for new employees. It could also be used by councillors.

Action Point: Executive Assistant to the Leader to liaise with HR Business Partner and ensure councillor induction packs include the Whistle Blowing Policy.

- vii. There was no legal duty to whistle blow, but there may be a moral one and employees are encouraged to speak up. It may be a requirement set out in certain professional codes of ethics.

Unanimously resolved to approve the Whistleblowing Policy.

The meeting ended at 6.10 pm

CHAIR