

CIVIC AFFAIRS

11 September 2024

5.30pm

Present: Councillors McPherson (Chair), Gawthrop Wood (Vice-Chair), Robertson, Sheil and Young

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL**24/27/Civ Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Rob Bennett, Independent Person.

24/28/Civ Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

24/29/Civ Minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on 10 July 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

24/30/Civ Public Questions

There were no public questions received.

24/31/Civ Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Transparency: Annual Report

The Committee received a report on the Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Transparency Annual Report.

The report was introduced by the Information Governance Manager, this was the annual report providing assurance for Councillors and members of the committee. Training was provided to on a quarterly basis to those who complete responses to Freedom of Information requests.

Members of the Committee commented on the report which included:

- i. The figures presented to members were in relation to the City Council. The other authorities within the shared service received their own reports.
- ii. Work had been done by officers around increasing the strength of systems around cyber security and training was provided to staff to be able to identify threats to cyber security.

The Committee agreed to resolve (Unanimous) that the contents of the report are noted.

24/32/Civ Internal Audit update report

The Committee received a report in relation to an Internal Audit update.

The report was introduced by the Head of Shared Internal Audit. Members were directed to the appendices contained within the report and questions that had been submitted by the Council's Independent Person which included:

1. will the full plan be completed by the end of the year?
2. will the audit check a sample of rents to ensure that they are being calculated correctly in the first instance?
3. concerns on the findings of the Housing electrical safety audit, what was being done to ensure that the quality of the recorded data is improved and the backlog of uninspected properties was cleared as soon as possible and was there a detailed plan to do that with a planned trajectory to complete the work over time and was that being monitored for delivery?
4. members should see the results of the Fire Safety audit when available.

Members of the Committee commented on the report which included:

- i. In answering some of the questions from the Council's Independent person, the resources were in place to complete the work outlined in the plan. If there were any higher priority items that arose through the year these would be looked, this was the benefit of having an agile audit plan.
- ii. With regards to the rent re-calculations these were being adjusted accordingly. Officers were working the team to work through some mitigations that could be taken going forward.
- iii. An action plan was in place to improve the electrical safety data. Data Quality was important, and the majority of records were correct. The errors (mostly date related) were related to how data

was updated between our records and contractor records. Good progress has already been made by the compliance team to ensure both records are consistent and accurate. There was a monitoring framework in place. Information had been reported regularly to the Housing Scrutiny Committee. Officers had also been regularly attending the Housing Compliance Board meetings, which is keeping us regularly updated on the progress of the works.

- iv. In terms of the fire safety The HRA Fire Compliance was limited assurance and the HRA Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Data Quality was reasonable assurance. Further updates would be provided in future reports.
- v. With regards to the limited assurance around housing payments for those from Ukraine these had now been resolved and adjustments made and will be reported as an assurance in the next report.
- vi. The Council was being proactive in ensuring the refunds for the rents errors were made. There was still some final data from DWP that needed to be checked against.
- vii. Contact with the external auditors varied, at the current time external auditors were focused on the backlog of accounts that needed to be signed off, but the working relationship with the external auditors was positive.
- viii. There was a graduate trainee within the team previously, this was part of a programme of placements across the three Councils. It was a struggle to recruit to internal audit roles so having this within graduate programmes was a positive.
- ix. The Council had a risk register that would highlight potential risks for the Council to be aware of. There were times where it was not possible to identify beforehand issues as was the case with the incorrect rent figures. However, officers worked with peers across other authorities to try and get as much information as possible to avoid issues going forward.
- x. There were strong controls in place around data governance and working with contractors around this, including the data they held and how this was shared.
- xi. Internal Audit were not the experts in housing rents, there was a reliance on those with experience being able to pick up some of the issues that were identified. There was now regular engagement with the Housing team as Internal Audit attended the Housing Compliance Board. As part of good governance those areas flowing from the Housing Compliance Board were being reported to the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

- xii. There was an important role for Housing Scrutiny Committee in looking in more detail on some of those issues and assurances that were given.

The Committee resolved (unanimous) to:

- i. approve the draft Internal Audit Plan and Strategy; and
- ii. approve the supporting Charter and the Code of Ethics.

24/33/Civ Officer Delegated Decisions

**24/34/Civ Joint Negotiating Committee's Chief Officers Pay Agreement
2024-2025**

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

The meeting ended at 6.35pm

CHAIR