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Civic Affairs

Civ/1

Monday, 12 May 2025

CIVIC AFFAIRS

12 May 2025
5.30pm – 7.45pm

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

In attendance: Councillors Bick, Davey and Holloway

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

2025/1/Civ Apologies

Apologies were received from Rob Bennett, Independent Person.

2025/2/Civ Declarations of Interest

In response to a question, it was noted that the members' allowance scheme was relevant to an item on the agenda but that this was not a disclosable pecuniary interest for members in receipt of such allowances.

2025/3/Civ Public Questions

No public questions were received.

2025/4/Civ Annual Governance Statement and Local Code of Governance

The committee received a report on the council's Annual Governance Statement, which reported on the annual review of effectiveness and provided an update on the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

The committee discussed the Cambridge City Housing Company business plan, noting that it had been presented to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Committee in January 2023. The committee discussed the role of the council as shareholder and the rights and expectations of the shareholder as regards access to company accounts. Officers agreed to provide a full answer following the meeting.

The committee resolved unanimously to:

1. Approve the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) attached at Appendix A in advance of the Statement of Accounts.
2. Note the arrangements for compiling, reporting on and signing the AGS:
 - a. the progress made on issues reported in the previous year;
 - b. the current review of effectiveness; and
 - c. the issues considered for inclusion in the current AGS.

2025/5/Civ Statement of Accounts for year ended 31 March 2024

The committee received a report on the council's Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 and the Audit Completion Report produced by EY.

The committee noted that the council had breached the backstop date by which an audit could be completed and an opinion issued, and that this breach had been reported to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The committee discussed the reasons for the late publication of accounts, noting that the lack of staff had been a key reason for the late publication. The auditor clarified that the late publication was a breach of statutory requirements, hence the opinion issued. The committee noted that several local authorities had breached the backstop publication date.

The committee discussed the national context of recruitment challenges and noted that representations on the matter had been made to the auditor and that these had factored into the decision of the auditor not to issue a report through the provisions of Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

The committee resolved to:

1. Note the contents of the EY Audit Completion Report 2023/24.
2. Approve the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024, subject to any remaining amendments per recommendation 3.
3. Delegate authority to the Chief Finance Officer to approve any amendments to the Statement of Accounts arising from the remaining audit procedures, provided that these do not have a material impact on

the Council's usable reserves or result in any changes to the auditor's opinion.

4. Authorise the Chair of the meeting to sign the Letter of Representation and the Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 on behalf of the Council.

2025/6/Civ External Audit Plan 2024/25

The committee received a report on EY's Audit Plan 2024-25, which outlined the timeline of the audit, and the risks identified.

In response to a question regarding the timeline of communication and deliverables, the committee was advised that it was the primary aim for public reporting to get back on schedule. It was confirmed that EY was aligned with the timeline and would expect to be finished by the end of November 2025 and reported out by the end of December 2025 thereby allowing the council time to prepare the budget-setting finance report.

The committee resolved unanimously to:

1. Note the contents of the EY Audit Plan 2024/25.

2025/7/Civ Cambridge City Council Constitution

The committee received a report which proposed changes to the council's constitution, which followed the decision of an extraordinary meeting of Council on 17 March 2025 to adopt changes to the committee establishment of the Council.

The committee discussed the range of matters which may need to be resolved following the adoption of an updated constitution,

In response to questions, it was clarified that the report recommended a nine-month review and that training on the changes would be provided to members and was in the process of being arranged.

The committee resolved, with 4 votes to 0 with 1 abstention, to recommend to Council:

1. That Full Council approve the draft Constitution, which includes the LGA model Code of Conduct, and for it to come into effect at the Annual Council meeting in May 2025.
2. To note the Monitoring Officer has responsibility to ensure the Constitution is up to date and lawful, including by making 'housekeeping changes' to ensure it is comprehensible and consistent as required.
3. To note that the Constitution will be reviewed within nine months and any further changes to be adopted through the correct channels.

2025/8/Civ Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel

The committee received a report outlining the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the council's arrangements for providing members' allowances and expenses, as required by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

The committee received notice of an amendment to the scheme from the Labour Group which, if adopted and agreed by Council, would change several of the allowances available and rates thereof. The committee discussed the proposals within the amendment, noting that it would lead to increases in the allowances paid to administration members, and debated the scale of the changes proposed.

The committee discussed the timing of the circulation of the proposed amendment. Following a short break during the meeting, it was agreed not to move the amendment and to instead agree the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for referral to Council, and for the recommendations to be reviewed in the 2025-26 municipal year. This amendment was moved by Councillor Robertson, seconded by Councillor Bennett, and put to the vote where it was carried.

The committee resolved unanimously to recommend to Council:

1. To consider the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, as set out in Appendix 1.
2. To agree the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for referral to Council, and for the recommendations to be reviewed in the 2025-26 municipal year.

2025/9/Civ Committee Appointments

The committee received a report recommending that the Civic Affairs Committee recommend to Council the appointments to committees subject to the outcomes of two byelections being held on 2 May 2025.

The committee resolved unanimously to recommend to Council:

1. The City Council committees and the nominations to the joint and partner bodies (as updated on 12 May).
2. The nominations for Chairs and Vice Chairs (as updated on 12 May).

The meeting ended at 7.45pm

CHAIR

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