

AUDIT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 23 November 2021 (6:20 pm – 8:10 pm)

PRESENT:

Councillor Holes (Chair); Councillors Bourne, Campbell, Grajewski, Irish, Manning, Pragnell, Park and Tennent

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RESOLVED ITEMS (SUBJECT TO QUESTIONS ONLY)

100. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation on this occasion.

101. MINUTES

Councillor Grajewski noticed a spelling mistake on page 2 of the minutes, cited should have been sited.

**RESOLVED –**

**That the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**

102. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in relation to items of business on the agenda.

103. 2020/21 EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE

EY Partner, Janet Dawson, EY Manager, Simon Mathers, and EY Assistant Manager, Katie Lean, presented the 2020/21 External Audit Progress Update report (Agenda Item 5).

There was a lengthy discussion around the report and its meaning with regards to the uncertainties mentioned within it.

Councillor Grajewski required some clarity from a report that was previously mentioned but could not be discussed in public as it was confidential.

The Chair suggested that Councillor Grajewski discussed her concerns with the audit team another time so that they could fully understand what her concerns were.

The Chair stated that he had requested information around how secure the safety net is around rental payments and other outgoings and profit margins on rental income from the Chief Finance Officer.

**RESOLVED –**

**That the Audit and Resources Committee noted the 2020/21 External Audit Progress Update Report.**

104. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Executive Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer presented the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) (Agenda Item 6).

Councillor Grajewski requested clarity on whether the final reported would be updated again before January when it is due to be approved, and also queried whether the development of an action plan in support of the Climate and Environment Strategy had taken place and was completed in June 2020 as stated in the report.

The Executive Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer stated that further updates to the AGS were possible as the document was still a draft. She also confirmed that the Climate and Environmental Emergency Action Plan was approved by Cabinet in June 2020 as stated and there was also an update coming to Policy and Performance Scrutiny Panel soon.

**RESOLVED –**

**That the Audit and Resources Committee noted the Annual Governance Report.**

105. INTERNAL AUDIT QUARTERLY MONITORING STATEMENT (QTR 2)

The Chief internal Auditor (Acting) presented the Internal Audit Quarterly Monitoring Statement (Qtr 2) (Agenda Item 7).

**RESOLVED –**

**That the Audit and Resources Committee noted the Internal Audit Quarterly Monitoring Statement (Qtr 2).**

106. CORPORATE FEES AND CHARGES

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer presented the Corporate Fees and Charges Report (Agenda Item 8) by the Strategic Planning Manager.

Councillor Grajewski requested confirmation on whether there would be a report around parking, which was under review by a working group and

whether that report could come to Audit and Resources Committee before it goes to Cabinet.

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer agreed that there would be a number of reports and that the appropriate one could come to the Committee before Cabinet.

## **RESOLVED –**

**That the Audit and Resources Committee noted the Corporate Fees and Charges Report.**

### 107. VERBAL UPDATE ON STAFFING REPORT

The Deputy Chief Finance Officer gave a verbal update provided by the Head of HR on the staffing report and agreed to circulate the update to Members via email after the meeting.

Councillors requested that the report include commentary on the wellbeing of working from home and returning to work, and that it also include the impact on services from outstanding vacancies and the difficulties in recruitment, including missed bin collections as councillors were receiving many complaints about them being missed.

There was discussion around apprenticeships and it was agreed that the Executive Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer would ask that more information on apprenticeships data was circulated to the Committee after the meeting.

### 108. VERBAL UPDATES FROM MEMBERS REPRESENTING STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT GROUP (SRMG) / PROCUREMENT EXECUTIVE GROUP (PEG)

#### **(a) Strategic Risk Management Group (SRMG)**

Councillor Grajewski reported that SRMG had met on Thursday 18 November 2021 and that they had discussed the following:

- The Corporate Risk Register was reviewed and items which were red had stayed red and one that was green had changed to amber.
- The Operational Risk Register was reviewed and had various sections which were red due to staff shortages and resources, including elections, but that work was ongoing to improve it.
- The Risk Appetite Statement was reviewed and feedback given before it was shared with Audit and Resources Committee.

- Emerging Risks would be updated over the next few weeks with regard to business role reforms and business rate retention.
- An update on construction costs and building supplies would be brought to SRMG in January.
- The Senior Projects and Programmes Officer had shared a presentation he had put together after a course on Management of Risk Learning Points and Considerations which had been much appreciated – Councillor Grajewski felt that a briefing similar would help Members.

The Executive Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer agreed to look into a Risk Management briefing for Members.

**(b) Procurement Executive Group (PEG)**

Councillor Irish reported that PEG had met on Tuesday 2 November 2021 and that they had discussed the following:

- A finance report was presented by the Senior Accountant which contained spend detail broken down into categories of spend. The group agreed that they needed to focus on exceptions and it was agreed that ahead of the next meeting work would be done to provide high level detail with previous years' comparisons and that narrative will be added to the report to provide an explanation for the exception.
- The group reviewed the procurement performance indicators and noted that that payments outside of 10 days had increased significantly. It was agreed that this would be reviewed and an explanation provided to the group ahead of the next meeting.
- The group discussed progress with the Procurement Action Plan, in particular the Sustainable Procurement Policy. The Climate Change Manager provided an update on progress, which included meeting with top procurers at the council to ask for feedback on Government Sustainability Buying Standards and a review of financial information to identify the areas of biggest impact to ascertain what action can be taken to address the impact on the climate and environment. The group had a discussion about construction projects and contracts and how the Council could address the impact on the climate and environment.
- A request to waive contract standing orders for the purchase of an additional garden waste vehicle was presented and approved by Councillors.
- Following a request to waive contract standing orders for the extension of an officer working under an agency contract last month, a discussion took place about the use of agencies and consultants. The group agreed that it was appropriate to use agencies to appoint staff temporarily but that the

emphasis should be on temporary and therefore should be closely monitored. A corporate project entitled Attract, Recruit & Retain will include a review of the use of agencies. It was agreed that the Procurement Officer would identify if there were any appropriate framework agreements that staff could be signposted to, this will ensure that procurement processes were complied with and potentially avoid the need for waivers.

109. ACTION LIST

The Committee considered the Action List, which set out the recent decisions and subsequent actions arising from the Committee.

**It was AGREED -**

**That the Action List be noted.**

110. CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

The Committee requested that the Capital and Treasury Strategy be added to the Audit and Resources Work Programme for February 2022.

**It was AGREED -**

**That the current Forward Plan be noted.**

111. A&R WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its current Work Programme.

**It was AGREED -**

**That the Work Programme be noted.**