

Meeting	Audit & Governance Committee
Date	26 September 2013
Present	Councillors Potter (Chair), Brooks (Vice-Chair), Ayre, Barnes, Burton, Wiseman and Mr Whiteley (Co-opted Non-Statutory Member)
Apologies	Councillor Watson

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## **22. Declarations of Interest**

Members were asked to declare any personal interests not included on the Register of Interests, any prejudicial interests or any disclosable pecuniary interests which they may have in respect of business on the agenda. None were declared.

## **23. Minutes**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of 31 July 2013 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **24. Public Participation**

It was reported that there was one registration to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme. Ms Swinburn raised the following issues:

- Commenting on the fact that the draft protocol (agenda item 5) referred only to filming, Ms Swinburn requested that consideration be given to making recordings of other meetings available on the Council's website.
- Whilst welcoming the arrangements that were being made to improve the handling of Freedom of Information requests, Ms Swinburn stated that she had concerns regarding the wording of some of the emails she had received from staff responding to Fol requests which she had lodged.

## **25. Forward Plan**

Consideration was given to a paper which presented the future plan of reports expected to be presented to the Committee during the forthcoming year to July 2014.

Members had been consulted on their availability to attend an additional meeting of the committee and it was agreed that this would be held on 6 November 2013 at 5.30pm.

Resolved: That the Committee's Forward Plan for the period to July 2014 be agreed.

Reason: To ensure the Committee receives regular reports in accordance with the functions of an effective audit committee and can seek assurances on any aspect of the Council's internal control environment in accordance with its roles and responsibilities.

## **26. Protocol for Filming, Photography and Recording at Public Meetings**

Members considered a report that presented a draft protocol for the webcasting of Full Council and Cabinet meetings.

Members made the following comments on the draft protocol:

- The protocol had been referred to as a "webcasting" protocol. Consideration also needed to be given to issues in respect of the photography and recording of public meetings and hence the wording of the protocol needed to better differentiate when references were to webcasting only and when the references were in respect of the wider filming and recording of meetings.
- Paragraph 6 – an explanation was required in respect of the terminology "private session".
- Paragraph 7 – whilst this paragraph referred to the termination or suspension of webcasting, no reference had been made as to whether permission for public filming or recording would also be suspended if such circumstances arose.
- Paragraph 10 – "young people" needed to be defined (e.g. was this a person over the age of 16 or 18?)

- Paragraph 15 – clarity required as to how an attendee would be expected to make it known that they did not wish to be filmed.
- Paragraph 17 – could the wording on the webcasting notice also be displayed on the agenda for the meeting?
- Paragraph 17 – arrangements should be in place to ensure that members of the public who did not wish to be filmed, or who were a child or young person (as defined in para 10) were able to be seated in an area that would not be filmed. The wording of the final paragraph of the webcasting notice should be amended accordingly.
- Paragraph 18 – clarity required to make it evident that this refers to all meetings that are open to the public and not just Full Council and Cabinet.
- Paragraph 19 – amend final sentence of the paragraph to read “will” rather than “should”.

Members stated that whilst they agreed in principle to the aims of the protocol and would support its introduction as an interim measure, they would wish to see the suggested amendments being incorporated into the protocol before recommending its adoption.

Resolved: That the draft protocol be updated to reflect the proposed changes and be given further consideration at the next meeting<sup>1</sup>.

Reason: To ensure that a protocol is in place which strikes a balance between allowing webcasting of meetings with the needs of those who either do not wish to be filmed or are young people.

Action Required

1. Update draft protocol for consideration at next meeting SH

## 27. **Annual Financial Report - Statement of Accounts 2012/13**

Members considered a report that presented:

- A final set of accounts for 2012/13 to reflect changes made since the draft pre-audit accounts were presented to the committee on 31 July 2013
- The external auditors' Audit Completion Report
- The letter of representation

The external auditors drew Members' attention to their overall conclusion and opinion. They confirmed that the outstanding issues had now been resolved and drew attention to the recommendations detailed in paragraph 8 of their report.

Thanks were expressed to the officers who had been involved in the preparation of the accounts.

- Resolved:
- (a) That the matters set out in the Audit Completion Report (Annex B of the report) presented by the external auditor be noted.
  - (b) That the 2012/13 Statement of Accounts be amended in respect of the identified misstatements in section 10 of the Audit Completion Report (Annex B).
  - (c) That the amended Annual Financial Report (Annex A of the report) be approved for signature by the Chair in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
  - (d) That the letter of representation (Annex C of the report) be approved for signature by the Director of Customer and Business Support.
  - (e) That the anticipated receipt of an unqualified Audit Opinion to both the Statement of Accounts 2012/13 and the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources be noted.

- Reasons:
- (a) To ensure the proper consideration of the opinion and conclusions of the external auditor in respect of the annual audit of accounts and review of the Council's arrangements for ensuring value for money.
  - (b)-(d) To ensure compliance with International Auditing Standards and relevant legislative requirements.
  - (e) To ensure members of the Audit and Governance Committee are aware of any

matters arising from the annual audit of the Annual Financial Report.

**28. Scrutiny of the Treasury Management Annual Report 2012/13 and Review of Prudential Indicators**

Members reviewed the Treasury Management Annual Report and Review of Prudential Indicators 2012/13 in accordance with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance.

Resolved: That the Treasury Management Annual Report 2012/13 and Review of Prudential Indicators (Annex 1 of the report) be noted.

Reason: To ensure that those responsible for scrutiny and governance arrangements are updated on a regular basis to ensure that those implementing policies and executing transactions have properly fulfilled their responsibilities with regard to delegation and reporting.

**29. Information Governance Strategy Update, Including Freedom of Information Processes**

Members considered a report that updated them on information governance matters. As requested by the Committee at their meeting on 9 July 2013, the report also reported on the Freedom of Information (Fol) process in light of several recent reviews including one by internal audit.

In response to questions regarding the processing of Fol requests, officers confirmed that there were occasions when it was necessary for staff to seek further clarification from the enquirer but, in such circumstances, it was expected that staff would act in a courteous and helpful manner.

Concerns were expressed regarding delays that had arisen in responding to some Fol requests. Officers gave details of the arrangements that were being put in place in response to the significant increase in the workload of the team and of the improved monitoring arrangements.

Members asked about the arrangements that were in place to identify trends in request for information and to make this information more readily available, for example by including it on the Council's website. Officers confirmed that this was an area that was being developed.

At the request of Members, details were given of the IT system that was in place and of medium term system changes that would be required to integrate FOI, complaints and feedback into the council's Customer Relationship Management System (CRM).

- Resolved:
- (a) That the Information Governance Strategy update be noted.
  - (b) That the Freedom of Information reviews and proposed system improvements be noted.
  - (c) That six monthly performance reports on Freedom of Information activity, including an Annual Report, be presented to the Committee<sup>1</sup>.

Reason: To ensure the council meets the requirements of Freedom of Information legislation, and is open and transparent in its publishing of information.

Action Required

1. Include on Committee's workplan

EA

Councillor Potter, Chair

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm and finished at 7.00 pm].