

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 20 November 2019 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors M. Lloyd Jones (Chair), Wall (Vice-Chair), E. Cargill, A. Lowe, MacManus, McDermott, N. Plumpton Walsh, Joe Roberts, G. Stockton and J. Stockton

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: E. Dawson, I. Leivesley, M. Murphy, A. Scott and S. Baker

Also in attendance: Helen Stevenson and Mark Heap from Grant Thornton (External Auditors)

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
BEB9	MINUTES	
	<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2019 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
BEB10	DRAFT PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2020-2023	
	<p>The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which sought approval of a draft Procurement Strategy 2020/23.</p> <p>The Board was advised that the Council's current Procurement Strategy (the Strategy) covered the period 2016/19 and that the actions contained within it had been fully implemented. Consequently, an updated Strategy, attached to the report at Appendix 1, had been developed, which took into account the Local Government Association's 'National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England 2018' publication.</p> <p>It was noted that the Strategy was broadly structured around three key themes of Showing Leadership; Behaving Commercially; and Achieving Community Benefits; and consolidated the significant progress made in developing the Council's procurement arrangements following the</p>	

implementation of the previous strategies. It was reported that a further fourth theme which related to Ensuring Governance had also been included, which related to the need to maintain robust systems and procedures to ensure that procurement activity was undertaken with appropriate levels of control, probity and transparency, and was compliant with the Council's own procurement rules and wider legislation.

Members were advised that in developing the Strategy, account had been taken of the environment within which the Council operated. Progress would be reported to the Board throughout the lifecycle of the Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Draft Procurement Strategy 2020/2023, attached to the report, be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community and
Resources

BEB11 2018/19 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which provided an update on the external audit of the Council's 2018/19 Statement of Accounts. The external auditors, Grant Thornton, attended the meeting to present their progress report.

It was reported that the Statement of Accounts set out the Council's financial performance for the year in terms of revenue and capital spending and also presented the year-end financial position as reflected in the balance sheet.

It was reported that due to a number of technical accounting issues, the External Auditor was still not in a position to publish the audit certificate or opinion on the 2018/19 Statement of Accounts. The Board was reminded that on 31 July 2019, the Council published a notice which outlined the reasons why it had not been able to publish the final Statement of Accounts. The External Auditor had provided a report on the technical accounting issues which were still subject to audit; this was attached as an Appendix to the report.

Helen Stevenson and Mark Heap, external auditors from Grant Thornton, dealt with questions from Members.

RESOLVED: That the External Auditor's progress report presented in the Appendix attached to the report, be noted.

BEB12 EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update from the external auditors regarding:

- Progress made in delivering their responsibilities as the Council's external auditors; and
- A summary of emerging national issues and developments that could be relevant to the work of the Board.

Helen Stevenson and Mark Heap, from external auditors Grant Thornton, attended the meeting to present the report and then dealt with Members' questions. It was confirmed that audit work on the completion of the 2018/19 accounts would run alongside the commencement of work on the 2019/20 audit of accounts.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

BEB13 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in

accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

(N.B. Councillor Martha Lloyd Jones declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as she was a Governor at St Edwards Primary School)

BEB14 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Divisional Manager, Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance, which provided Members with a summary of the internal audit work completed since the last progress report in July 2019. The report also highlighted matters relevant to the Board's responsibilities as the Council's Audit Committee.

It was noted that a total of 14 Internal Audit reports had been finalised since the last progress report. An overall assurance opinion was provided for each audit engagement. It was reported that one follow-up audit had been completed since the last report. Details were provided in the report.

It was reported that the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards required that the Chief Audit Executive deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report to inform the Council's governance statement. It was noted that Management had responded positively to all of the issues identified in the audits and that there were no outstanding matters from those audits that would have implications for the internal audit opinion.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

DATE FOR NEXT MEETING OF THE BOARD

At the conclusion of the meeting, Members were reminded of the arrangements for the next meeting of the Business Efficiency Board.

The next meeting would take place on Monday 24 February at 6.30pm in the Civic Suite, Runcorn Town Hall. A training session would be delivered at 5.30pm in the same venue. It was therefore noted that the additional meeting booked for 8 January 2020 and the scheduled meeting on 25 March 2020 were both cancelled.

Meeting ended at 7.15 p.m.