

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Audit and Governance Board held on Wednesday, 29 September 2021 at the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chair), A. Lowe (Vice-Chair), J. Bradshaw, E. Cargill, Jones, McDermott, Philbin, J. Stockton and Wallace

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Whitley

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: E. Dawson, I. Leivesley, M. Murphy and G. Ferguson

Also in attendance: Michael Green (Grant Thornton)

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

AGB9 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2021 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

AGB10 STANDARDS MATTERS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which considered the arrangements for dealing with Standards matters following the decision of the Council on 14 July 2021 that this Board would assume the work of the former Standards Committee and that its terms of reference be amended as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

In addition, the Board also noted the future arrangements for the Hearings Panel, which considered the outcome of formal investigations into complaints that Member or Parish Councillors may have broken the Code of Conduct. The Panel was to be retained on the same basis as the arrangements approved by Council and would now sit beneath the Board, with the 3 Members appointed ad hoc and as necessary from the membership of the Board. It was suggested that training could be given to Panel Members on the day of any necessary hearing.

RESOLVED: That Members approve the

arrangements as set out in the report for dealing with Standards matters following the decision of Council on 14 July 2021 that this Board assume the responsibilities of the former Standards Committee.

AGB11 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER BIENNIAL UPDATE 2021/22

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the bi-annual update of the Corporate Risk Register for 2021/22.

The Board was advised that the Council recognised its responsibility to manage both internal and external risks as a key component of good corporate governance. At Directorate level, arrangements were in place for the high risk mitigation measures on the Directorate Risk Registers to be reviewed and updated annually, in line with Directorate Business Plans. Progress was then reported to Management Team and Policy and Performance Boards.

It was reported that the Risk Control Measures had been reviewed and updated in line with current changes within the Authority and as proposed by managers and stakeholders. The risks had been re-prioritised so that people, (the community and staff), took priority. These were set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That

1. the progress of actions be noted; and
2. the robustness of the Corporate Risk Register and the adequacy of the associated risk management arrangements be noted.

AGB12 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN - 2020/21 YEAR-END

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which set out the 2020/21 year-end Audit Plan, presented by Grant Thornton UK LLP.

The Board was advised that the External Audit Plan was attached to the report and set out details of Grant Thornton's strategy and plan to deliver the 2020/21 audit of the Council's financial statements. It also provided details of their approach to the value for money conclusion.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the External Audit

Plan for 2020/21 year-end be noted.

AGB13 EXTERNAL AUDIT OF THE 2020/21 ACCOUNTS (VERBAL UPDATE)

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.

Michael Green, from external auditors Grant Thornton, attended the meeting to present the report and then dealt with Members' questions.

It was anticipated that the external audit of accounts would be completed by January 2022.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update by the Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP be received.

AGB14 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 items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A 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 the public interest 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 Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A 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.

AGB15 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Board received a report from the Divisional Manager – Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance, updating them on the internal audit activity since the last progress report to the Board on 7 July 2021. It also highlighted any matters that were relevant to the Board's responsibilities as the Council's Audit Committee.

Members were referred to appendix one, which listed all the planned work for the year and the anticipated dates that each audit would be reported to the Board. It was noted that the planning and completion of work was subject to change, but this represented the best estimates at the current time.

Further to the last update in July, Members were advised that most of the work on the 2020/21 Audit Plan was now complete. The remaining audit work from 2020/21 was in progress and nearing completion.

Appended to the report were copies of the finalised 13 audit reports since the last progress report to the Board in July. The report summarised the opinions from the audits covered in this progress report.

Arising from the discussion, the Board expressed concern at the outcome of the audit report on Local Authority Day Care Provision. A report on this audit report would be presented to a future meeting of the Executive Board.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Progress Report and comments made be noted.

Meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.