

## BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

*At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 24 March 2021 held remotely.*

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor N. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

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

Also in attendance: M. Green and S. Nixon (Grant Thornton). One member of the press.

### ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
BEB20 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
BEB21 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019-20	
<p>The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which sought approval of the final 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement (AGS).</p>	
<p>The 2019/20 AGS was originally presented to the Board on 23 September 2020. It was important that the AGS was up to date when the statement of accounts were approved. As such, the document was presented again for the Board to review.</p>	
<p>Once approved the AGS would be signed by the Council Leader and Chief Executive and published on the Council's website.</p>	
<p>RESOLVED: That the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 be approved.</p>	

BEB22 2019/20 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS, AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which sought approval for the Council's 2019/20 Statement of Accounts (the latest version of which was enclosed with the Agenda), and the report of the Audit Findings of the External Auditor (Grant Thornton) on the 2019/20 financial statements. The report also sought approval of the Council's Letter of Representation.

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. The key elements were detailed in the report.

The External Auditor presented the Audit Findings report which summarised the findings from 2019/20 external audit. Section 2 of the Audit Finding report presented the finding of the External Auditor in respect of matters and risks identified at the planning stage of the audit and additional and significant matters that arose during the course of their work. Whilst Section 3 of the report also presented the External Auditor's findings on the Value for Money (VFM) conclusion. It was noted that the overall conclusion was that the Council had proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Councillor Philbin asked a number of questions regarding Runcorn Locks and it was agreed that a response would be circulated to Board Members.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the draft Letter of Representation in Appendix 1 be approved and any subsequent additions or amendments be approved by the Operational Director - Finance, in liaison with the Chair of the Business Efficiency Board;
- 2) the External Auditor's draft 2019/20 Audit Findings Report in Appendix 2 and Audit Opinion in Appendix 3 be received and any subsequent additions or amendments be approved by Operational Director - Finance, in liaison with the Chair of the Business Efficiency Board; and
- 3) the Council's draft 2019/20 Statement of Accounts in Appendix 4 be approved and any subsequent

additions or amendments be approved by the Operational Director - Finance, in liaison with the Chair of the Business Efficiency Board.

#### BEB23 PROCUREMENT UPDATE REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on:

- Procurement activity in 2020/2021, with an outline of the key actions taken during the year;
- Brexit and its impact on the Council's procurement arrangements, with details on the new e-tender service 'Find a Tender' which was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021; and
- The progress achieved in delivering the Council's Procurement Strategy 2020-2023 and the impact of COVID-19.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

#### BEB24 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2021/22

The Board considered a report of the Divisional Manager, Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance, which sought approval for the planned programme of internal audit work for 2020/21.

A risk based Audit Plan had been prepared, designed to enable internal audit to deliver an overall opinion on the Council's risk management and control and governance arrangements.

A copy of the draft Audit Plan for 2020/21 was attached as an appendix to the report. It was noted that the Plan had incorporated a number of reviews originally included in 2020/21 Audit Plan that could not be completed during the year due to significant amounts of unplanned work being necessary to support the Council's response to the pandemic.

The Board was advised that, as in previous years, the Audit Plan would need to remain flexible and that changes may be required in order to respond to risks which emerge during the year.

Performance against the Audit Plan would be kept under review throughout the year and regular progress reports would be provided to the Business Efficiency Board.

Internal Audit would work closely with the Council's external auditor, Grant Thornton, to minimise duplication and to ensure efficient and effective deployment of the overall audit resource.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22.

BEB25 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.

**Councillors E. Cargill and McDermott were not in attendance for Minute no. BEB26**

BEB26 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 internal audit work completed since the last progress report on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The report also highlighted matters relevant to the Board's responsibilities as the Council's Audit Committee.

It was reported previously that COVID-19, had had a significant impact on the work of Internal Audit in 2020/21. There had been a continuation of Covid-19 related audit work since the last progress report with support provided in respect of the range of grant and relief payment schemes introduced by Government. Overall, internal audit coverage in 2020/21 would be less than planned, primarily due to the team providing operational support to other business areas, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Councillors Roberts and MacManus for their contribution to the Board and wished them well for the future.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*Meeting ended at 7.48 p.m.*