

## CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

- \* Councillor Nigel Manning (Chairman)
- \* Councillor Jo Randall (Vice-Chairman)

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|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| * Councillor Philip Brooker         | * Mrs Maria Angel |
| * Councillor Alexandra Chesterfield | * Mr Charles Hope |
| * Councillor Colin Cross            | * Ms Gerry Reffo  |
| * Councillor Geoff Davis            | * Mr Ian Symes    |
| * Councillor Mike Hurdle            |                   |

\*Present

Councillor Marsha Moseley and Bernard Quoroll (Independent Person) were also in attendance.

### **CGS20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **CGS21 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

There were no disclosures of interest.

### **CGS22 MINUTES**

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2016. The Chairman signed the minutes.

### **CGS23 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2015-16**

The Head of Financial Services gave a presentation summarising the background and purpose of the accounts, the role of the Committee in reviewing the accounts and some of the key balances and movements.

Comments from the Committee raised the following points and information:

- Typically, the Council received two requests to inspect the accounts from members of the public each year. However, the Council had not yet received any requests to view the Draft Statement of Accounts 2015-16.
- The Committee heard that the pension deficit was a risk, however tax-raising bodies such as the Council were considered lower risk. The total contributions paid into the pension scheme was based on the triennial valuation, not on the figures that appeared in the draft statement of accounts. The figures in the accounts were reached on a valuation basis, to allow for comparisons between different organisations.
- The Local Government pension scheme was still open to new members and an Act of Parliament would be required to close it down. The Surrey fund was cash positive, in that the contributions made by serving officers paid for the benefits paid out to pensioners. Although there would always be risks, the scheme was performing relatively well.
- In the past year, rental income from investment property had risen by about 8% and the direct operating expenses arising from investment property had risen at almost three

times that rate. The Committee noted that the rental income for properties with multiple tenants was higher; however, there was often a corresponding increase in expenses.

- Financial risks were mitigated through regular monitoring and by ensuring that reserves and contingency plans were in place to deal with unforeseen circumstances.
- The Director of Corporate Services was employed under a consultancy contract in 2014-15 and was directly employed by the Council in 2015-16. An Interim Director of Development was in place from August 2015 until June 2016. The Council was currently recruiting a permanent Director of Development. The Committee was informed that at director level there was a six-month recruitment process.

The Committee,

RESOLVED to note the Draft Statement of Accounts 2015-16, as set out in Appendix 1 to the Officer's report.

Reason for Decision: The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the approval of the statutory Statement of Accounts by 30 September.

#### **CGS24 EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT AND UPDATE**

The Committee considered a progress report and update from the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton on the audit of the Council's 2015-16 financial statements. The auditors had reported that, to date, they had found no significant issues to bring to the Committee's attention. One completed, the auditors would bring a comprehensive report with full findings to the Committee in September 2016.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the impact on the Council of the referendum decision to leave the EU, the Head of Financial Services confirmed that the Council did not receive any funding from the EU so there had been no immediate tangible loss. The volatility of the markets had impacted upon the Council's investment income, but it was unclear whether this volatility was a short-term reaction to the shock of the referendum result.

The Committee were informed that most economists suggested that in the longer term there would be a recession. The Council had begun to consider mitigation measures including ensuring reserves are earmarked to cover fluctuations of volatile areas and creating strategies for continued economic growth.

The Committee,

RESOLVED to note the progress report and update.

Reason for decision: To allow the Committee to comment on the External Auditor's progress report and update.

#### **CGS25 UPDATE ON G LIVE ACCIDENT**

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on ongoing civil and criminal proceedings following a fatal accident that had occurred at G Live in February 2013.

The Committee would receive a further update after the conclusion of the criminal trial.

The Committee,

RESOLVED to note this update

Reason for decision: to keep members of the Committee up to date.

## **CGS26 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered its work programme for 2016-17.

The Committee,

RESOLVED to approve its updated work programme for 2016-17

Reason for decision: To allow the Committee to maintain and update its work programme for the 2016-17 municipal year.

## **CGS27 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

In view of the sensitivities around the subject matter of Item 7 on the agenda (Security Arrangements of Councillors), the Chairman proposed that consideration of the matter should be dealt with in private.

The Committee therefore,

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the public be excluded from the meeting for consideration of Item 7 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

## **CGS28 SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS OF COUNCILLORS**

The Committee considered a report that provided an update on the security of Councillors.

The report was introduced by the Council's Public Health Co-ordinator who informed the Committee that although the current national threat level was still severe, officers were not aware of any specific threat to councillors in Guildford.

Comments from the Committee raised the following points and information:

- Bradford City Council and Northampton Borough Council had introduced safety guidance for councillors, which provided sensible and practical advice. The Committee agreed that similar guidance should be circulated to all councillors and parish clerks.
- Parish clerks were lone workers. Although the Council did not employ the parish clerks, officers were happy to advise them. The report would be circulated to the parish clerks, as would any updates on safety measures the Council was taking.
- Councillors' home addresses were available on the Council website. Any councillor could request that their details were removed. Information contained in a councillor's register of interests could only be withheld if the Monitoring Officer was satisfied that there was a specific threat to the councillor.

The Committee,

RESOLVED to note the report.

Reason for decision: To keep members of the Committee up to date.

The meeting finished at 7.58 pm

Signed .....

Chairman

Date .....