

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

27 July 2017

* Councillor Gordon Jackson (Chairman)

* Councillor Jo Randall (Vice-Chairman)

* Councillor Alexandra Chesterfield

* Councillor Colin Cross

* Councillor Mike Hurdle

* Councillor Nigel Kearse

Councillor Nigel Manning

* Mrs Maria Angel

* Mr Charles Hope

* Ms Geraldine Reffo

* Mr Ian Symes

*Present

The Lead Councillor for Infrastructure and Governance, Councillor Matt Furniss and the Lead Councillor for Finance and Asset Management, Councillor Michael Illman were also in attendance.

CGS13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Nigel Manning.

CGS14 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT - DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

CGS15 MINUTES

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2017. The Chairman signed the minutes.

CGS16 EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

The Committee considered an update report from the Council's external auditors, Grant Thornton on the audit of the Council's 2016-17 financial statements. The auditors had reported that, to date, they had found no significant issues to bring to the Committee's attention. Once completed, the auditors would bring a comprehensive report with full findings to the Committee in September 2017.

The Committee

RESOLVED:

That the content of the External Auditor's update report be noted.

Reason for Decision:

To allow the Committee to comment on the External Auditor's update report.

CGS17 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND FRAMEWORK 2017

The Committee considered a report on the adoption of a revised Risk Management Strategy and Framework 2017. Risk management was an integral part of the Council's governance framework, but it was an everyday occurrence within services, whether the decision making process was formal or informal. The Committee noted that its terms of reference included

‘monitoring the effective development and operation of risk management and corporate governance in the Council’.

Risk was not just about identifying negative events, it was also about identifying the positives and the opportunities within day-to-day service delivery or projects. This had become more relevant and important given the Council’s ambitious Corporate Plan, the financial pressures that the Council as facing and the desire to look for income generating business opportunities. It was also sound business practice.

The Council’s objectives for risk and opportunity management were to:

- (i) embed risk and opportunity management into the culture of the Council
- (ii) embed the culture of risk and opportunity management at a strategic and operational level and within all projects and partnerships
- (iii) identify and manage the key risks and opportunities facing the Council
- (iv) maximise the opportunities for achieving the corporate objectives and minimise the risks of service failure
- (v) learn from opportunity outcomes and risk failures to improve awareness and our systems and processes.
- (vi) use risk and opportunity management to support the decision-making processes - both strategic and operational
- (vii) comply with our legal obligations and ensure that effective risk and opportunity management arrangements were in place to support the Annual Governance Statement and the overall governance framework of the Council.

Risk management was designed to ensure that the key risks and the opportunities relating to corporate objectives were identified and managed. Failure to do so could have a significant impact on the Council’s performance and ability to achieve stated objectives. However, it was recognised that risk could not be eradicated and to try to do so would mean that the organisation would not change or move forward.

The challenge for the Council was to achieve high performing, innovative services through the sensible management of risk and opportunity.

Having considered the report, the Committee

RESOLVED:

That the Committee commends to the Executive the adoption of the Risk Management Strategy and Framework 2017, subject to the following comments:

- (a) the inclusion in *Step 8: Review, Report and Monitor* of the requirement for an annual report to be presented to the Corporate Governance and Standards Committee reviewing progress on the management of risk within the Council generally and monitoring future progress against the Strategy and Framework; and
- (b) the inclusion in the corporate report template of a separate section on “Risk Management Implications”

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that there is a system for effective monitoring, development and operation of risk management in the Council.

CGS18 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COMPLIANCE UPDATE

The Committee considered an update report on the monitoring of the Council's performance in dealing with Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests. The Committee also noted the various corrections to the report including updated statistical information as set out on the Supplementary Information sheet circulated at the meeting.

The Committee was pleased to note that, for the calendar year up to 10 July 2017, the Council's overall performance rate for responding to FOI requests within the 20 working day deadline stood at 92%, which compared favourably with the figure of 89.5% recorded for the same period in 2016. The Council was therefore currently meeting both the Information Commissioner's performance indicator of 85%, and the 90% target agreed by the Corporate Management Team.

The Committee

RESOLVED:

That the actions taken by officers be noted and that the Committee continues to receive updates to ensure that the Council continues to meet and, wherever possible, exceed, the 90% compliance target.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that the Committee is kept up to date with FOI/EIR performance.

CGS19 SUMMARY OF INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS OCTOBER 2016 - MARCH 2017

The Committee considered a report setting out a summary of Internal Audit Reports for the period October 2016 to March 2017.

Questions from the Committee raised the following points and information:

- In relation to the implications of the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), it was suggested that the officer Project Board established to oversee this work should involve councillors at an appropriate stage to discuss the practicalities and implications of GDPR from the councillor's perspective, including training
- In relation to those audit reports where the audit opinion was classified as "limited assurance", the Chief Internal Auditor confirmed that the audit team revisited those areas that were subject to the initial report within six months to ensure that audit findings and recommendations had been implemented
- The Chief Internal Auditor confirmed that the write-offs of housing benefit overpayments over £10,000 referred to in the report had not been properly authorised by the Lead Councillor for Finance, in accordance with the requirements of Financial Procedure Rules.

Having considered the various reports, the Committee,

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the summary of audit reports and other associated work for the period 1 October 2016 to 31 March 2017 be noted.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure an adequate level of audit coverage.

CGS20 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee, having considered its proposed work programme for the remainder of the 2017-18 municipal year,

RESOLVED: That the updated work programme for 2017-18, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report submitted to the Committee, be approved.

Reason for Decision:

To allow the Committee to maintain and update its work programme.

The meeting finished at 7.40 pm

Signed

Chairman

Date