

MINUTES OF GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MEETING DATE Monday, 24 August 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Ian Watkinson (Chair), Colin Sharples (Vice-Chair), Damian Bretherton, Colin Clark, Christine Melia, Margaret Smith and Angela Turner

OFFICERS: Gary Hall (Interim Chief Executive), James Thomson (Deputy Director of Finance), Dave Whelan (Shared Services Lead - Legal & Deputy Monitoring Officer), Tony Furber (Principal Financial Accountant) and Darren Cranshaw (Assistant Director of Scrutiny & Democratic Services)

OTHER MEMBERS AND OFFICERS: Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council and Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Michael Titherington (Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Health, Wellbeing and Leisure) and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group)

EXTERNAL AUDITOR: Simon Hardman (Grant Thornton PLC)

43 Apologies for absence

There were none.

44 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

45 Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 8 July 2020 of Governance Committee

The minutes of the last meeting held on 8 July 2020 were agreed.

46 External Auditor Update

Simon Hardman from the Council's External Auditor, Grant Thornton provided a verbal update. Grant Thornton were continuing to progress the audit for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

It was reported that due to Mark Heap's absence new arrangements had been put in place and Mark Stocks would be our new relationship manager. Mark Stocks was a partner and Head of Public Sector Assurance at Grant Thornton. Mr Stocks is due to attend the next meeting of the Governance Committee.

A detailed plan was being produced to ensure the audit is conducted as quickly as possible. A great deal of work had already been completed, but the findings of the internal audit reports were yet to be considered as well as changes to the external audit environment such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

A new Grant Thornton resource on financial reporting as a result of COVID-19 and a National Audit Office report on reporting would be shared with the Governance Committee.

Following enquiries from Members about the timescale for finalising the audit, a date could not be provided at present, but reassurance was provided that a plan including timescales was being developed.

There was a Member query about whether the internal audit report on the utilities contract, which had no assurance would be considered as part of the audit. Confirmation was provided that the internal audit reports would be considered.

47 Statement of Accounts for the Financial Year 2019/20

The Governance Committee received a report of the Deputy Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer presenting the draft statement of accounts for 2019/2020 and advising on the statutory requirements and role of Members.

A Member training session on the accounts is to be arranged before the accounts are finalised.

Following a Member enquiry about the Expenditure and Funding Analysis surplus on page 18 of the report, confirmation was provided that the transfer was planned to be made from a reserve and that there was not a charge for the year.

A query was made about the reference to the corporate risk register not being monitored. It was reported that corporate risks had been identified but not monitored due to attention being drawn to other matters. This is one of the issues being taken forward through the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Chair

Date