

Minutes of Governance Committee

Meeting date Tuesday, 10 January 2023

Members present: Councillors Ian Watkinson (Chair), Colin Sharples (Vice-Chair), Damian Bretherton, Alan Ogilvie, David Shaw, Margaret Smith and Kath Unsworth

Other members attending in person: Councillors Matthew Tomlinson, Phil Smith and Gareth Watson

Officers present: Chris Moister (Director of Governance), Georgia Jones, Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer), Darren Cranshaw (Head of Democratic Services), Chris Moister (Director of Governance), Dawn Highton (Head of Audit & Risk) and Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Other virtual attendees: Georgia Jones, External Auditor, Grant Thornton;
Councillors Harold Hancock, Mick Titherington, and Karen Walton

Public: 0

32 Apologies for absence

There were none.

33 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

34 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of 29 November 2022 were presented for approval.

A update was requested further to Minute 29 regarding the provisional Government Settlement. The Director of Finance, Louise Mattinson indicated that the one year provisional settlement was received in 19 December 2022 and officers were currently working through the details. She indicated that it included provision for local authorities to increase council tax up to 3% (rather than 2% previously).

Arising from the Minute 28 a query was raised as to the current position in relation to the financial statements audit. Georgia Jones of Grant Thornton, the Council's External Auditors informed members that there had been a few issues creating a delay, including a change to CIPFA guidance just before Christmas which generated further work. It was anticipated that everything would be signed off by the end of next

week. Grant Thornton would be issuing its final report but there were no substantial changes.

A progress update was requested in relation Minute 31 regarding the convening of a Constitution Working Group. The Director of Governance, Chris Moister informed the Committee that a scoping document should be produced by the end of this week and the first meeting would be scheduled in due course.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the minutes of the meeting held 29 November 2022 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

35 Homes England Compliance Audit - McKenzie Arms

The Director of Finance presented a report giving details of the need to acknowledge receipt of the Homes England Compliance Audit report as required by Homes England.

Arising from the report, whilst appreciating that the audit is confidential, members requested additional information regarding the questions on the audit and where possible further details in relation to the Council's "green" status confirming that it had met all the requirements.

Resolved (unanimously):

1. To acknowledge receipt of the report as required by Homes England.
2. To note that there are no breaches recorded and the report is green meeting all requirements.

36 Annual Governance Statement: Actions - update

The Director of Governance presented a report giving details of the need to update members of the Committee as to progress on the implementation of the improvement actions in the Annual Governance Statement.

Arising from a query in relation to the expected completion of all the 9 categories, the Director of Governance indicated that the progress delays were stated in the report and it may not be possible to have all actions completed by the end of the financial year. He stressed that none of the improvement actions have an impact on the Annual Governance Statement.

Resolved (unanimously):

That the report be noted.

37 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved (unanimously):

That the press and public for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

38 Audit and Risk Interim Report as at 31st December 2022

The Head of Audit and Risk presented a report informing members of the work undertaken in respect of the Internal Audit Plan from September 2022 to December 2022 and to give an appraisal of the Internal Audit Service's performance to date. The report also provided information for members regarding wider work of the Audit and Risk Service.

The Head of Audit and Risk confirmed that the remaining report at draft stage was for the waste collection service and will be presented to the Committee in March 2023.

Several queries were raised and concerns expressed in relation to the Commercial Services Directorate Procurement Review, which gave details of a number of process failures. The Director of Governance explained that the failures by individuals to follow the processes already in place had been dealt with and a management action plan had been agreed to provide assurance that the issues identified in the report were not replicated elsewhere. The Director of Governance also agreed that he would discuss with the Chief Executive undertaking further investigations into the identified issues, but which are separate to the issues relating to the Governance Framework.

Resolved (unanimously):-

1. That the position with regard to the Internal Audit Plan and the work of the wider Service be noted;
2. That with regard to the Commercial Services Directorate Review, the Chair be requested to write to the Chief Executive seeking assurance that he is satisfied that all the risks were realised and that adequate steps have been taken;
3. That members of the Committee be provided with a copy of the above letter; and
4. That an update on the Management Action Plan be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

Chair

Date

