

Minutes

Audit & Scrutiny Committee Monday, 13th March, 2017

Attendance

Cllr Mrs Pound (Chair)	Cllr Hirst
Cllr Reed (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Mrs Hones
Cllr Bridge	Cllr Keeble
Cllr Chilvers	Cllr Mrs Murphy
Cllr Mrs Fulcher	Cllr Kerlake

Officers Present

John Chance	-	Finance Director (Section 151 Officer)
Steve Summers	-	Group Manager In House Services
Andrew Barnes	-	BDO, Internal Audit
Debbie Hanson	-	Ernst & Young, External Audit
Pamela Hillie	-	Ernst & Young, External Audit
Ramesh Prashar	-	Financial Services Manager
Greg Rubins	-	BDO, Internal Audit
Sue White	-	Risk and Insurance Officer

316. Apologies for absence

There were no Members absent.

317. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 January 2017 were approved.

318. Strategic Risk Review

The report updated Members of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on new, closed or changes to strategic risks.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Murphy and **SECONDED** by Cllr Bridge.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED**:

To agree amendments to the Strategic Risk Register and that the risk scored recorded for each risk accurately represents the current status of each risk.

Reasons for recommendation

Risk Management continued to be embedded quarterly within the Senior Management Teams reports, where Service Heads discussed the top level risks for their service area to ensure that the risks were updated to reflect the ongoing changes.

In addition the Risk & Insurance Officer would continue to work with risk managers to maintain the good progress to date and further develop a consistent application of risk management considerations across all operations of the Council.

319. Annual Certification Report

The report presented the External Auditor's annual report in respect of the Certification of Claims and Returns; specifically the Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim for the financial year 2015/16.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Pound and **SECONDED** by Cllr Reed.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That Members note the contents of the Certification of Claims and Returns Annual Report 2015/16 at Appendix A.

Reason for recommendation

For Members to review the findings of the external audit's certification work.

320. External Audit Plan

The Audit Plan sets out how Ernst & Young intended to carry out their responsibilities as the Council's External Auditor in auditing the final accounts for the financial year 2016/17.

The plan summarises our initial assessment of the key risks driving the development of an effective audit for the Council, and outlined the planned audit strategy in response to the risks.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Pound and **SECONDED** by Cllr Reed.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY** that:

Members are requested to note the External Audit Plan 2016/17.

Reason for recommendation

The Audit Plan would confirm the statutory audit opinion.

321. Internal Audit Progress Report

The report detailed the progress to date against the 2016/17 internal audit plan that was agreed with in the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in March 2016.

The full reports were available on request.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Pound and **SECONDED** by Cllr Murphy.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

To receive and note the contents of the reports.

Reason for recommendations

To monitor the progress of work against the internal audit plan.

322. Internal Audit Plan and Operation Plan

The report outlines the Internal Audit Operational Plan for 2017/18.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Hones and **SECONDED** by Cllr Reed.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the Committee approves the Internal Audit Operational Plan for 2017/18.

Reason for recommendations

To approve the work programme for Internal Audit Operational Plan for 2017/18.

323. Internal Audit Charter

The Charter was a requirement of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). It formally defined internal audit's purpose, authority and responsibility. It also established internal audit's position within Brentwood Borough Council and defined the scope of internal audit activities.

The Charter was presented to the Committee in March 2016 and had been updated for 2017/18.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Pound and **SECONDED** by Cllr Reed.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

That the Committee note and approve the Internal Audit Charter for 2017/18.

Reason for recommendation

The Charter was a requirement of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). It formally defined internal audit's purpose, authority and responsibility.

324. Corporate Complaints Monitoring and Freedom of Information Requests

The report before Members to monitor and review the complaints received through the Council's formal complaints process and provide information on the number of Freedom of Information requests received during the period of April 2016 to September 2016.

As agreed by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee a Members Working Group had been formed to consider and review Formal Complaints received under the Council's Formal Complaints Policy.

The Members Working Group met on 16th February 2017 and consisted of the following Councillors Pound, Poppy, Barrett and Chilvers. The Group agreed its Terms of reference as set out below:

1. To consider in detail Formal Complaints received by the Council in 2016/17.
2. To consider how Formal Complaints were reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in the future.
3. To make recommendations to the appropriate Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

At its first meeting the Working Group went through each of the 29 formal complaints that had been received in the period April to September 2016 and identified the following:

1. Noted that the Council had introduced a new Formal Complaints Policy and that it was not necessarily a negative matter to receive complaints as this could assist in reviewing services that were provided by the Council.
2. That complaints were reported to the Council Leadership Board both for performance management and also for learning and improvement in service delivery.
3. That there had been a reduction in the number of complaints received in the period April to September 2016 (29) as opposed to the overall total in 2015/16 (76).
4. Recognised that Housing and Planning received the most complaints due to the nature of the service they deliver to residents.
5. That the majority of Planning complaints in this period related to the processing of pre-applications, however this had now significantly improved.

6. The Housing complaints were mainly for voids and for repairs. The Working Group noted that the Housing Services were currently undertaking reviews of service delivery in both of these areas.
7. The Working Group also made suggestions as to how they would like the information presented in the future and would also consider how such complaints information could be presented at future Audit and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Chilvers and **SECONDED** by Cllr Reed.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

1. **That the Committee agrees the complaints received and outcomes through the Council's formal complaints process during the period April 2016 to September 2016.**
2. **That the Committee agrees the number of Freedom of Information requests received during the period April 2016 to September 2016.**

Reason for recommendations

To ensure complaints were dealt with in a satisfactory manner and ensure processes and service delivery were regularly reviewed.

325. Work Programme 2016/17

The work of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee would be delivered both by Members working in groups and through formal committee reports. The Audit and Scrutiny Committee would make recommendations to decision making committees and Council as necessary. Audit and Scrutiny Committee were invited to consider its 2016/17 work programme.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Bridge and **SECONDED** by Cllr Hirst.

A vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY**:

That the Audit and Scrutiny amended work programme 2016/17 at appendix A of the report be approved.

Reason for recommendation

The Constitution required that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee agreed its work programme at each meeting of the Committee.

326. Urgent business

The Chair advised the committee that Mr Prashar was leaving the authority at the end of April and on behalf of the committee would like to thank him for all his hard work and support he had provided to members.

The meeting ended at 20:10.