

Minutes

Audit and Scrutiny Committee Tuesday, 28th September, 2021

Membership/Attendance

Cllr Nolan (Chair)	Cllr Jakobsson
Cllr Tanner (Vice-Chair)	Cllr McLaren
Cllr Mrs Fulcher	Cllr Naylor
Cllr Hirst	Cllr Mrs Pound

Substitute Present

Also Present

Cllr Barber
Cllr White

Officers Present

Steve Summers	-	Strategic Director (Deputy Chief Executive)
Jacqueline Van Mellaerts	-	Corporate Director (Finance & Resources)
Amanda Julian	-	Corporate Director (Law and Governance) and Monitoring Officer
Tracey Lilley	-	Corporate Director (Housing & Community Safety)
Janine Combrinck	-	Internal Audit, BDO
Zoe Borman	-	Governance and Member Support Officer

LIVE BROADCAST

[Live broadcast to start at 7pm and available for repeat viewing.](#)

125. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Haigh.

126. Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the Audit & Scrutiny meeting held on 6th July were approved as a true record.

127. Certification of Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim 2019-20

This report presented the External Auditor's annual report in respect of the Certification of the Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim for the financial year 2019/20.

Members complimented officers on the thorough report and significantly low error rate resulting in no detrimental effect to the Council's claim from DWP. However, concerns were raised regarding errors relating to child benefit claims which Mrs Van Mellaerts advised was being dealt with in accordance with the recommendation following the audit.

Members were asked to note the report.

128. Internal Audit Progress Report 2021-22

This report intended to inform the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of progress made against the 2021/22 internal audit plan.

The following reports had been finalised since the last Committee:

- Covid-19 grants expenditure (Substantial/Moderate)
- Local development plan (Substantial/Substantial)
- IT Data Breaches (Substantial/Moderate)

Ms Janine Combrinck, Internal Auditor, was present at the meeting and summarised the report.

Members raised concerns regarding the number of outstanding recommendations and timeframes involved. Officers assured Members that these would be reviewed in detail over the next two months in order to close as many as possible.

Members were asked to note the report.

129. Risk Management

This report updated members of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on the status of the Council's 2021/22 Strategic Risk Register and high-level operational risks.

The Risk Registers are currently under review to align them to the Corporate Strategy, as well as presenting them in a more appropriate format.

Mrs Van Mellaerts summarised the report.

Members raised concerns regarding risk around the national shortage of HGV drivers and potential wage demands. Officers advised that the wider issue was being reviewed in terms of collaborating with other authorities and upskilling to mitigate risk.

Further concerns were raised regarding the Treasury Management risk and the latest Bank of England guidance concerning inflation, highlighting the short-term risk of modest tightening of monetary policy. Members asked if this particular risk was being reviewed. Mrs Van Mellaerts advised this risk had been recently categorised as a medium risk and that the Council's relationship with the Treasury advisors was strong, receiving weekly updates and in regular dialogue and the Council were confident the treasury function would not fail. However, the risk register is being reviewed and an additional risk regarding inflation may be added in the future. Long and short term borrowing is constantly measured and reviewed. Interest rates also form part of the MTFs and further monitored via this mechanism.

Following a full discussion, Members were asked to note the report.

130. Formal Complaints & Performance Indicator Working Group

This report submitted the report and recommendations of the Formal Complaints and Performance Indicators Working Group for consideration by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Nolan and **SECONDED** by Cllr Tanner to approve the recommendations in the report.

Following a full discussion a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

To note the Formal Complaints and Performance Indicators Working Group report, as attached at Appendix A, and agree the recommendations contained within it.

Reasons for Recommendation

To ensure the Council provides quality customer services.

131. Local Development Plan Member Working Group Update

The Local Development Plan (LDP) Member Working Group is an established engagement between Officers and Councillors focussed on delivery of the

Council's Local Plan and related work. Its purpose was approved by Policy, Projects and Resources Committee in September 2017.

The work of the working group is monitored by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee as part of the committee's work programme. This report provided an update on the most recent meetings of the working group.

Members were asked to note the report.

132. Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22

The Constitution requires that the Audit & Scrutiny Committee agrees its Scrutiny work programme at each meeting of the Committee. This report provided an update of the current scrutiny work programme and is set out in Appendix A.

In addition, as requested at the last Audit & Scrutiny Committee (min 77 refers) attached at Appendix B for information are the minutes of the Brentwood Leisure Trust Working Group held on the 10th August 2021.

Mr Summers advised that 2 items were missing from the Scrutiny Work Programme attached as Appendix A to the report.

1. Council Motions
2. Member representation on outside organisations.

The amended appendix is attached to the Minutes.

A motion was **MOVED** by Cllr Nolan and **SECONDED** by Cllr Tanner to approve the recommendations in the report.

Following a full discussion a vote was taken by a show of hands and it was **RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY:**

1. That the Committee considers and agrees the 2021/22 Scrutiny work programme as set out in Appendix A to include Council Motions and Member representation on outside organisations.

Reasons for Recommendation

The Constitution requires that the Audit & Scrutiny Committee agrees its Scrutiny work programme at each meeting of the Committee.

133. Axis Annual Report 2020-21

This report submitted the review of the Strategic Asset Management Contract between the Council and Axis for the period April 2020 – March 2021 following presentation to the Member Working Group for consideration by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.

Ms Lilley was present at the meeting and summarised the report.

Members welcomed this report and were pleased to see positive feedback from tenants.

Ms Lilley clarified the stringent controls in place with regards to the signing off of works undertaken and the availability of the out of hours service.

With regard to the concerns raised concerning contract management, officers advised officer training was in place and that the Contract Schedule was currently being updated.

134. Urgent Business

There were no urgent items.

The meeting concluded at 20:30
