

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 27 th July 2022
Subject: Chairs report for Audit and Scrutiny Committee	Wards Affected: All
Committee Chair: Cllr Sandy Tanner	
Report of: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Corporate Director – Finance & Resources	For Information

The Audit & Scrutiny Committee met on the 5^h July with the updates set out below:

Audit Results Report 2020/21

The Council's External Auditors, Ernst & Young LLP (EY) have substantially completed their audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2020/21. The committee received a report that presented their conclusions and draft letter of representation.

External Audit propose to issue an unqualified audit opinion for the Statement of Accounts 2020/21. They are satisfied that they give a true and fair view and are free from misstatement whether due to fraud or error, subject to audit adjustments highlighted in section 4 of their Audit Results Report and a verbal update that was given at the Committee.

External Audit have also reviewed the Council's Value for Money Assessment and are satisfied the Council has proper arrangements in place they would expect to see.

Conclusion of the audit is still in progress and delegated authority was requested to approve the statements, should no material amendments arise upon completion.

Internal Audit 2021/22

The following reports have been finalised since the last committee and were reported to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 5th July 2022.

- Financial Planning and Monitoring (Substantial/Substantial)
- Main Financial Systems (Moderate/Substantial)
- Capital Projects (Substantial/Moderate)
- Risk Management (Substantial/Moderate)
- Partnerships (Substantial/Moderate)

The Head of Internal Audit annual opinion which is included within the Council's Annual Governance Statement, that is reported alongside the Draft statement of accounts 2021/22, will be reported to the additional meeting agreed by the chair on 25th July.

Risk Management

The Committee regularly review the councils strategic and operational Risk Registers. The committee noted 13 Strategic risks on the register. 3 low, 6 medium, 1 high, and 3 very high. 3 risks scores had reduced from the previous committee and the other risks scores had remained the same.

Of the high-level operational risks, one risk score has been reduced, and the other risks scores had remained the same.

Community Safety Partnership Annual Report 2021/22

The committee noted the work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The CSPs Strategic Priorities for 2021/22 are:

- Safer Community
- Safer Future

A set of action plans were developed which underpins delivery of the above priorities. and sets out how the partnership will work together to stimulate activity across the Borough, focusing on those activities that add value because of being delivered in partnership.

Code of Conduct

The Council adopted a Member's Code of Conduct in 2012 following changes to the Standards regime. The current Code of Conduct is in Part 5 of the Constitution, the current code was developed in conjunction with other Essex authorities to try and ensure a consistent approach to dealing with Member's conduct matters. Since then, the Committee in Public Life published a report on standards in local government in 2019. As a response the Local Government Association produced the Model Code of Conduct to regulate the behaviours of councillors. Audit & Scrutiny agreed to adopt the Code of Conduct replacing the current code in Part 5 of the Constitution. The Code of conduct report is also included on Ordinary Council's agenda for consideration on 27th July 2022.

#OneTeam Transformation Programme

The Committee received an update on the progress of the #OneTeam Transformation Programme.

The Committee was invited to pre-scrutinise the s113 Agreement and propose recommendations to Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee (PRED) before its formal execution. The purpose of pre-scrutiny is to provide robust

and constructive challenge and make any comment or suggestion which will improve the quality of the s113 Agreement before it is executed.

Members raised concerns regarding an accelerated exit strategy should the need arise, for example, a change in administration and a draft recommendation was agreed to reflect this and recommended to Policy, Resources and Committee for approval.

Scrutiny Work Programme

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

In addition to this there were a number of matters agreed by the committee on the 5th July 2022 as follows:

- Councillor Cloke on the 14th May 2022 put forward for consideration for the Committees Scrutiny Programme as follows: 'Formation, make up and running of working groups. The membership of these groups does not seem to be assigned consistently or according to Widdecombe principles and I wonder if a standard approach should be applied. The work planned and completed by these groups is also opaque at best. My primary concern is the constitution working group but a review of the overall approach and other working groups would be of benefit.'
- The Committee approved on the 5th March 2022, Min330 refers, that a Working Group be formed for the purpose of evaluating the Outside Organisations and recommend the removal of any Outside Organisations to Ordinary Council for 2023/24. Members were requested to nominate representatives for a Working Group to take place and report to audit & Scrutiny Committee by March 2022.