

Minutes

Audit and Scrutiny Committee Tuesday, 23rd January, 2024

Attendance

Cllr Sankey (Chair)	Cllr Mayo
Cllr Naylor (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Rigby
Cllr Hirst	Cllr Wagland
Cllr Marsh	Cllr White

Apologies

Cllr Munden

Substitute Present

Cllr Gorton

Also Present

Officers Present

Steve Summers	- Strategic Director
Leigh Nicholson	- Interim Director - Place
Sam Wood	- Corporate Manager - Finance
Zoe Borman	- Governance and Member Support Officer
Andrew Billingham	- Internal Auditor

LIVE BROADCAST

[Live Stream commences at 7.00pm and available for repeated viewing](#)

353. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Munden and Cllr Gorton was substitute.

354. Minutes of the previous meeting

Cllr Hirst questioned why the Treasury Management Strategy 2024-25 had not come to this Committee. The Chair updated Members by advising, that officers had confirmed that the paper would be before Members at the next Finance, Assets, Investment and Recovery Committee (FAIR). The oversight was that Members had not been informed of this prior to commencement of the Committee.

Cllr Hirst referred to a conversation he believed took place at the last Audit & Scrutiny Committee (A&S) regarding the Treasury Management Strategy coming before A&S for scrutiny prior to FAIR and questioned why there was no mention of this in the Minutes.

The Minutes will be reviewed and amended as necessary and presented to Members at the next meeting for agreement.

Cllr Hirst requested this matter be referred to the Constitution Working Group and Monitoring Officer for review as the opportunity to pre-scrutinize the Treasury Management Strategy had not been permitted. Members requested the Strategy be brought to the next A&S meeting for scrutiny. The Chair agreed.

Mr Sam Wood updated Members on the financial audit. The audit is ongoing and the audit manager will be invited to the next committee, in March, to report their findings. There are some ongoing issues with regards to valuations.

355. Internal Audit Progress Report

This report is intended to inform the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of progress made against the 2023/24 internal audit plan.

The following reports has been finalised since the last Committee meeting:

- Risk Management (Moderate/Moderate)
- Communications and Information Sharing (Moderate/Moderate)

Mr Andrew Bellingham presented the report.

Members raised concerns regarding Social Media Access in particular 5.2 relating to password changes. Mr Bellingham advised that this recommendation would be reviewed as part of the follow up process.

Officers confirmed the S106 Agreements register would form part of the Planning Improvement Plan to be implemented in April 2024. This software allows monitoring of both S106 and CIL.

Members raised concerns regarding whether the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers were being brought to Audit & Scrutiny on a quarterly basis. Also, a date for the update of the current Service Plan was also requested by Members. Officers will update Members outside of the meeting.

Members raised concerns regarding the lack of senior officers present at the meeting to answer the questions raised following the reports brought before them and requested the attendance of relevant officers at future meetings.

Concerns were also raised around the proposed revised Building Control Performance Criteria and the delay and lack of timetable to deal with matters that may arise. Officers advised they would approach colleagues for further information.

Members noted the report.

356. Treasure Management Update

This report gives an update on the Council's treasury management activity and performance for the period April to December 2023.

Mr Wood pointed out an error on page 5, in point 4 "A table of investments as of 31st December 2023 totalling £24,380m is shown at Appendix A"; this figure should read "£24m".

Mr Wood summarised the report.

The report was noted by Members.

357. Treasure Management Strategy 2024-25

This report will be going to Finance, Assets, Investment & Recovery Committee.

358. Report on the progress of work to deliver improvements to the Development Management and Enforcement service

In July 2023, a report into the delivery of the wider Development Management services at Brentwood and Rochford was completed. That report contained a number of recommendations, which are now being actively progressed through an Officers Planning Improvement Board chaired by the Strategic Director responsible.

This report is tabled in order to update Members on the progress of this work and to seek comment on the on-going improvement programme.

Mr Summers introduced the report and advised that Mr Nicholson was present and able to answer any questions of the Committee.

Mr Nicholson confirmed that the Enforcement Policy was being reviewed as part of the comprehensive review of systems and processes with a view to improving efficiencies. The Council's current Enforcement Plan is published on our website.

With regard to the Planning Performance Agreements being self-financing, officers agreed to bring this policy before this Committee.

The report was noted.

359. Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24

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

Cllr Sankey **MOVED** and Cllr Naylor **SECONDED** the recommendations in the report.

Cllr Mayo advised the Committee the Performance and Formal Complaints Indicator Working Group were meeting on 4th March and the KPI meeting was due on 24th February.

With regard to the Implications of appointment system for Recycling Centres, officers advised that this would be reviewed as to the best course of action.

Members raised concerns about the timetable for the Scrutiny element of the Committee and whether, in future, this could be spread throughout the year. Officers pointed out that much of the work needed to be undertaken was either annually and quarterly which left little scope for the timetable to be reviewed.

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

That the Committee considers and agrees the 2023/24 Scrutiny work programme as set out in Appendix A to include the scoping of the work in relation to Implications of appointment system for Recycling Centres.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

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

360. Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting concluded at 20.10