



AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN, YSTRAD MYNACH ON WEDNESDAY 14TH JUNE 2017 AT 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Councillor M.E. Sargent – Chair
Mr N. Yates – Vice Chair

Councillors:

Mrs E.M. Aldworth, J. Bevan, D.T. Davies, Ms A. Gair, Mrs B. Miles, G. Simmonds and J. Simmonds.

Together with:

B. Morris (Grant Thornton).

S. Harris (Interim Head of Corporate Finance), R. Harris (Internal Audit Manager), R. Roberts (Performance Manager) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. TO APPOINT THE CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR

It was moved and seconded that Councillor M.E. Sargent be appointed as Chair of the Audit Committee for the ensuing year and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Councillor M.E. Sargent be appointed Chair of the Audit Committee for the ensuing year.

It was moved and seconded that Mr N. Yates be appointed as Vice Chair of the Audit Committee for the ensuing year and by a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that Mr N. Yates be appointed as Vice Chair of the Audit Committee for the ensuing year.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from C. Elsbury, Ms J. Gale, Mrs T. Parry, A. Whitcombe.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the beginning or during the course of the meeting.

4. MINUTES – 8TH MARCH 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 8th March 2017 (minute nos. 1 - 10) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

5. REGULATOR PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE

The report provided Audit Committee with an update on the progress made against the regulators proposals since the last Audit Committee update in December 2016.

Since December 2016 there have been 7 proposals addressed and 4 new proposals added onto the register.

The Committee noted that two new reports have been received which are being presented to Cabinet 5th July 2017, the proposals of which will then be reported to Audit Committee at the next available committee after that date.

As of December 2016 there were 11 proposals outstanding, as at May 2017 there are 15 proposals in total on the register with 4 new ones coming onto the register. The report recommended 7 be closed down as completed, leaving 8 outstanding.

The Committee noted that there were seven proposals from the original WAO Customer Services Review, now there is one outstanding. These proposals were delayed due to the decisions around the medium term financial plan and how this would affect what the Customer Service Strategy would deliver. At the last update in December members were concerned about the length of time to finalise the 4 outstanding proposals at that time and specific action has since been taken to speed up progress and finalise the work. The Strategy has been sent to all services to ensure it is included in service planning and new indicators have been designed to measure more important aspects of customer care. The final proposal on implementing surveys is taking place this summer and the Head of Customer Services is drafting a strategy for surveys. This will be in progress until the autumn when any surveys will be completed.

The Officer outlined that Asset Management originally had 7 proposals and now there are two left, one of which is recommended for closure, leaving 1 outstanding. The last two proposals are about developing individual service asset plans and implementing monitoring arrangements. Some services have individual service asset management plans (SAMPS) and some services are being reviewed, where the outcome of that review would determine how their SAMP is completed.

Members noted that future reports currently being completed from the 2016/17 WAO Audit programme to be reported on in 2017 are Welsh Housing Quality Standard, Asset Management and IT Managing Information.

Members thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member sought further information on the appendix and proposals in relation to the review of arrangements and workforce requirements. Officers explained that this was in reference to the HR Strategy, which has now been implemented. In terms of workforce requirements, this is dependent on the MTFP pressures and would be considered on a case by case basis.

In considering the Senior Member Training Programme, a Member queried whether this would be offered again to the new Cabinet and other Members. It was agreed that Officers would find out and update the Committee.

Members discussed the Customer Services Review and expressed concern in relation to the reduction of Customer Services hours and particular concern was raised for those Customer Service Centres based within libraries, which are not open during lunch hours and the impact this has on the public. Officers highlighted that the review was conducted, and as a result of financial pressures and savings requirements, the hours were reduced. A customer satisfaction survey is due to be disseminated during the summer months.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officers report, Audit Committee note the contents of the report and agree that the proposals noted as 'recommended to be closed' within the appendix be closed.

6. DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR 2016/17

The Audit Committee was presented with the Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2016/17, which has been updated since 2015/16, particularly in respect of areas of improvement.

The Committee was provided with an overview of the process and attention was drawn to the review outcome which outlined both the satisfactory progress made in respect of the previous year's action and the two new actions identified during the 2016/17 review. Members were now provided with an opportunity to review and make any changes they felt were justifiable.

Mr Barrie Morris, Grant Thornton addressed the Committee and suggested that, whilst considering the Draft Annual Governance Statement for 2016/17, Members may wish to consider the discussion in respect of the previous agenda item and whether any reference needs to be made within the statement regarding the timeliness in progressing the agreed actions.

Having further considered points raised in the discussions on the previous agenda item in light of the External Auditors comments, a Member requested that the progress in completing the recommended improvements arising from the Leisure Review be included within the Annual Governance Statement to ensure it is brought to a timely conclusion. Officers agreed to revisit the draft document and include suitable reference to the timely completion of the actions required in respect of the Leisure Review.

Following consideration and discussion, the Audit Committee thanked the Officer for the report and noted its contents.

7. AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Forward Work Programme up to September 2017 was presented for Member consideration. It was noted that the document is a working document and is regularly updated when additional reports are identified.

Having fully considered its detail the Audit Committee noted the Forward Work Programme and requested additional training in Audit specific topics. Grant Thornton offered to provide training on the role of external auditors.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS

The Committee received and noted the following information items:-

- (1) Update on the Numbers of Complaints Received Under the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017;
- (2) Annual Review of Complaints Received Under the Council's Corporate Complaints Policy 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017;
- (3) Assurance Framework;
- (4) Certificate of Caerphilly County Borough Council's 2017-2018 Improvement Plan;
- (5) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000;
- (6) Officers Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality January to March 2017;
- (7) Register of Employees' Interests Forms 2016/17;
- (8) Corporate Governance Panel held on 13th January 2017;
- (9) Corporate Governance Panel held 10th March 2017.

Prior to the close of the meeting, a Member requested that the meeting time for future meetings be changed to 2pm. Following discussion and agreement it was recommended that further consultation be conducted with Officers and the Committee.

The meeting closed at 10.40pm.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2017, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR