



GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 24TH JANUARY 2023 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

M. A. Adams, Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, M. Chacon-Dawson, Mrs T. Parry, and C. Wright (Vice Chair).

Lay Members:

N. Yates (Chair), M. Rees, V. Pearson and J. Williams.

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services), M.S. Williams (Corporate Director for Economy and Environment), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), D. Gronow (Acting Internal Audit Manager), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), S. Richards (Head of Education Planning and Strategy), R. Roberts (Business Improvement Manager), J. Pearce (Business Improvement Officer), N. Taylor-Williams (Head of Housing), K. Denman (Housing Solutions Manager), and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

B. Roberts (Audit Wales).

Also in attendance: Councillor E. Stenner.

RECORDING AND VOTING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting would be live-streamed and a recording made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items - [Click Here to View](#). Members were advised that voting on decisions would take place via Microsoft Forms.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Broughton-Pettit, P. Cook, and J. Taylor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. MINUTES – 11TH OCTOBER 2022

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 11th October 2022 be approved as a correct record, and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 7 votes for, 0 against, and 1 abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th October 2022 (minute nos. 1-12) be approved as a correct record.

4. MINUTES – 10TH JANUARY 2023

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Special Governance and Audit Committee held on 10th January 2023 be approved as a correct record, and by way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2023 (minute nos. 1-3) be approved as a correct record.

5. GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Acting Internal Audit Manager presented the Governance and Audit Forward Work Programme for the period January 2023 to May 2023.

Members noted the details of reports scheduled for the forthcoming meetings.

It was moved and seconded that the Forward Work Programme be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the Forward Work Programme as appended to the meeting papers be approved.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

6. UPDATE FROM AUDIT WALES – VERBAL UPDATE.

B. Roberts from Audit Wales gave a verbal update to Members and advised that the annual audit summary report will be brought to the next Governance and Audit Committee meeting, which will set out the work undertaken during 2021/2022. This will include key facts about financial positions and work undertaken with the performance audit.

Members were also advised that the Council's main statement of accounts was approved by Council on 17th January 2023, and certified by the Auditor General on 18th January 2023, which is ahead of the Welsh Government deadline of 31st January 2023. The accounts are now published on the Council's website and Audit Wales are currently preparing their audit of accounts addendum report with audit recommendations and the management responses, which Members were advised would be brought to the next Governance and Audit Committee.

Members were informed of ongoing audit work which included the performance audit and the waste recycling service review.

The Governance and Audit Committee noted the update.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES – UPDATE ON PROGRESS.

The Acting Internal Audit Manager presented the report which informed Members on progress being made against the audit plan and other unplanned work between the period 1st April 2022 and 31st December 2022, and to inform the Committee of the opinions derived from the work undertaken.

Members were referred to the status of all current audits as at 31st December 2022, which was shown in the appendices attached to the report, and noting that appendix 1 shows all completed and closed audits, including audit opinions.

Members were also advised that, where recommendations have been issued and agreed with Management in respect of individual audit reports, the progress towards implementation is reported separately to the Governance and Audit Committee.

A Member queried the current workload of the audit team and noted a high number of audits were still in progress. Members were advised that apart from 4 or 5 school audits that were due visits by the end of March 2023, the rest were self-assessments within schools. Members were also advised that the audit team were looking into the best way to audit the purchase cards system and currently these were included as individual audits. Members were assured that the workload was being monitored, and that additional resources had been put into the audit team within the past 12 months, with only one current vacancy outstanding, which is due to be filled in the next few months.

A Member clarified that in paragraph 2.1 of the report where it refers to June 2023, this should be June 2022.

The Governance and Audit Committee noted the content of the report.

8. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER (DECEMBER 2022) UPDATE.

The Business Improvement Manager presented the report to Members, which provides an opportunity for the Committee to satisfy itself that appropriate arrangements are in place for the Council's risk management processes to be regularly and robustly monitored and scrutinised. Members were advised that the report focuses on the Corporate Management Team update as of December 2022, in order to present the most recent information. Members were also informed that there are 18 risks on the risk register, 8 high risk, 9 medium risk and 1 low risk, with 8 new risks added since March 2022.

A Member sought clarification on the large amount of 'high risk' items and whether these were reducing or increasing. Members were advised that this figure includes the risks over the whole authority and has increased in the last 18 months. Members were referred to the risk guidance document on the Council's intranet, which would be circulated to members following the meeting.

A Member queried the process and definition of work undertaken and the level of risk defined as acceptable. Members were advised that determining the level of risk prepared to accept, depended on the nature of the risks and external factors, which currently include

capacity and resilience of staff.

The Governance and Audit Committee noted the content of the report.

9. REGULATOR RECOMMENDATION FOR IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS UPDATE.

The Business Improvement Manager presented the report which updated Members on progress of recommendations that have been made by all regulators since the last Governance and Audit Committee update, and to advise on any new proposals that have been added since that time.

Members were advised that the register was last updated and presented to the Governance and Audit Committee in March 2022. Since that time 6 new proposals have been added onto the register and no areas for consideration as part of the Well-being of Future Generations examination. Members were informed that there are currently 12 recommendations on the register with 6 new recommendations added, and 3 considered to be actioned and completed. Members were advised that, if agreed by the Governance and Audit Committee, this would leave 9 outstanding.

A Member sought clarification on where the assurances were considered to be and noted that the completion dates have already passed. Members were advised that the homelessness report is going to be presented to Members today, and will be included in the register, following the meeting. Members were also advised that in relation to the 'Springing Forward Assets' the new Head of Land and Property was appointed in December 2022 and the asset actions are to follow, including the new revised draft asset management strategy by April.

A Member clarified that in paragraph 5.12 of the report, where it refers to April 2022, this should be April 2023.

A Member queried whether the actions in the report could be cross-referenced with the risk register. Members were advised that this was a good proposal and would assist the Committee and CMT by bringing these both together.

Having considered the report, it was moved and seconded that the proposals noted as 'completed' within Appendix A be closed. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the proposals noted as 'completed' within Appendix A be closed.

10. SIX MONTH UPDATE ON CORPORATE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2022 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2022.

The Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the report which provided Members with an overview of the complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints policy for the six month period 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022 together with the outcomes and lessons learned. Members were referred to the Corporate Complaints policy which was included in the report as appendix 1. Members were advised that the report would also be presented to a meeting of the Cabinet.

A Member clarified that the reference to an 'Assembly Member' on page 91 of the report should be 'Member of the Senedd'.

The Governance and Audit Committee noted the content of the report.

11. AUDIT WALES REPORT – HOMELESSNESS – CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL.

B. Roberts from Audit Wales introduced the Officer report and confirmed that the Audit Wales report would be circulated to Members following the meeting. Members were advised that Audit Wales had previously reported on how local authorities dealt with homelessness and that Councils had to consider how they deal with homelessness. Members were informed of the details of the Audit Wales report, which was undertaken in 2022, looking at the approach taken by the authority to prevent homelessness.

A Member noted that the Audit Wales report had not been circulated to Members prior to the meeting, in order for Members to fully understand the recommendations given and the management responses.

A Member sought clarification on second homes within the County Borough and the potential to increase the Council Tax on these properties, and to bring empty properties back into use, which could then assist in dealing with homelessness issues.

Members were advised that there is a current focus on the 'empty property action plan' for residential and commercial properties, with around 1300 empty properties in the borough. Members were also referred to the 'development investment strategy' which addresses the supply of new houses.

The Housing Solutions Manager presented the report which informed Members of the information held/findings and recommendations within the Audit Wales Report into Homelessness with the CCBC which was published in November 2022. Members were referred to the Audit Wales findings and recommendations contained within the Officers report.

Members were informed of the Rapid Rehousing Plan, which has been approved by Cabinet, and submitted to Welsh Government, which includes the reduction in use of temporary accommodation, and homelessness within the borough. Members were also made aware of proposed changes within the housing solutions team, which could include a family mediation officer, a landlord/tenant mediation officer, and a specialist domestic abuse co-ordinator, which would be joint funded in association with Llamau.

Members were also informed that the current offenders' pathway is being reviewed for those coming out of custody, with monthly meetings being held with the Police and Probation Service, working together towards the prevention of homelessness.

A Member noted that it had been difficult to give proper consideration to the homelessness report, as the Audit Wales report had not been received prior to the meeting. The Member sought clarification on the timescales within which the findings and recommendations of Audit Wales are to be achieved, and the financial constraints with overspends and the resources that need to be addressed. The Member proposed the deferral of this item to the next Governance and Audit Committee meeting to allow Members to receive and consider the Audit Wales report.

Members were advised that the financial issues referred to by Members have been addressed and are included in the draft budget proposals for 2023/24, and were informed

of the additional grant funding provided by the Welsh Government, together with the growth bid that has been approved by Cabinet. Members were also advised of the timescales within which the recommendations were to be achieved, and information would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

The Chair thanked Officers and Audit Wales for their presentation of the report, and the Governance and Audit Committee noted the content of the report.

12-14. INFORMATION ITEMS

It was confirmed that none of the following items had been called forward for discussion at the meeting, and the Committee noted the contents of the reports: -

- (i) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000;
- (ii) Officer's Declaration of Gifts and Hospitality April to June 2022;
- (iii) Officer's Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality July to September 2022.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 3.38 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 18th April 2023.

CHAIR