



GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN PENALLTA HOUSE AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON TUESDAY 16TH APRIL 2024 AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillors:

M. A. Adams, Mrs. E.M. Aldworth, A. Broughton-Pettit, M. Chacon-Dawson, G. Enright, J. Taylor, and C. Wright (Vice Chair).

Lay Members:

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

Together with:

Officers: R. Edmunds (Corporate Director of Education and Corporate Services), S. Harris (Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer), L. Lane (Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer), D. Gronow (Acting Internal Audit Manager), K. Peters (Corporate Policy Manager), C. Evans (Information Governance Manager), S. Hughes (Committee Services Officer) and J. Lloyd (Committee Services Officer).

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. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E. Davies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES – 15TH FEBRUARY 2024.

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the Governance and Audit Committee held on 15th February 2024 be approved as a correct record, and by way of Microsoft Forms (and in noting there were 7 For, 0 Against, and 2 Abstentions) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15th February 2024 (minute nos. 1-11) be approved as a correct record.

4. GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer presented the Governance and Audit Committee Forward Work Programme for the period April 2024 to October 2024, together with an updated Action Sheet. Members were advised that when an item on the action sheet has been reported back to a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee as completed, this item would then be removed from the action sheet.

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 and verbal confirmation, 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.

5. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER 2023-2024 YEAR END UPDATE.

The Corporate Policy Manager introduced the report which provided an update of the Corporate Risk Register in accordance with the Councils' Risk Management Strategy, and enabled the Committee to have the opportunity 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 there are currently 17 risks on the Corporate Risk Register with no new risks added since the last report to Governance and Audit in November 2023.

A Member sought assurance on how the mitigations and progress impacted on the risk reduction plans and referred to CRR17 in the report, where it did not appear that the work being undertaken was reducing the risk, and therefore not having a positive impact. The Member also proposed having an additional column which would set out the targets for risks and progress being made against that particular risk level. Members were advised that an additional column would be considered and included going forward. Members were also advised that the efforts towards the cost-of-living crisis meant that a lot of CCBC resources had been diverted, resulting in some risk levels still remaining high, although the risk register is continuously being reviewed.

A Member referred to paragraph 5.4 in the report and noted that the numbers did not appear to match the numbers in the chart. The Member also requested that more information be included in the actions and progress column, particularly in relation to the scale of the resources that the Council is using to implement those actions. The Member also noted that three of the high risks related to staffing capacity and recruitment issues over a number of services, and queried which specific services this related to, and requested more clarification on the actions involved.

Members were advised that the recruitment challenge has been a high risk for some time and were referred to the investment in the past 12 months to the Council's new recruitment team. The staffing of this team was completed within 4 to 5 months and significant changes have already become apparent with regards to recruitment for full-time positions, although some professional vacancies have been more challenging to fill, post Covid. Members were also referred to the Medium-Term Financial Plan, in relation to the cost of living and the challenges and savings required.

A Member referred to CRR16 in the report, relating to retention strategies and requested the Head of People Services' attendance at the next meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee to answer Members' specific queries on this matter. Members were advised that this could be arranged and requested whether Members wished to specify any other CCBC policies to be considered. The Member sought clarification on the risks associated with the Councils Fleet and the Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme, in particular the effects on the authority and how they are being measured. Members were advised that there were specific challenges in relation to the Fleet workshop facility, however, with 2 new managers recently in post, improvements were already being seen.

Members were also advised that any risks associated with the ongoing Mobilising Team Caerphilly transformation programme, would be highlighted to Members as the programme progresses, and would be considered for inclusion in the Corporate Risk Register going forward, where this was deemed appropriate.

A Member requested further information, on a quarterly basis, in relation to the Cost-of-Living Crisis, in particular the level of resources being utilised and whether the actions were having a positive effect. Members were advised that the Caerphilly Cares team had recently produced a progress report, which could be circulated to Members for their information. Members were also referred to the £3m hardship fund provided by CCBC.

Having reviewed the content of the Corporate Risk Register and associated mitigating actions it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation (and in noting there were 11 For, 0 Against, and 1 Abstention) this was agreed by the majority present.

RESOLVED that it was satisfied that identified risks are being managed effectively.

6. SIX MONTH UPDATE ON THE CORPORATE COMPLAINTS RECEIVED FOR THE PERIOD 1ST APRIL 2023 TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 2023.

The Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer introduced the report which provided the Governance and Audit Committee with an overview of the complaints dealt with under the Corporate Complaints Policy for the six-month period 1st April to 30th September 2023 together with the outcomes and lessons learned. Members were advised that the report would also be presented to a meeting of the Cabinet.

The Chair thanked the Officer for seeking to arrange training with the Ombudsman and

asked that the proposed training dates be recirculated to Members.

A Member sought clarification on whether calls are recorded and utilised when dealing with complaints either for training purposes or should a claim arise. Members were advised that recording facilities are available in some of the authority's service areas, however, in relation to the specific social services complaint referred to, further information would be sought and fed back to the Committee following the meeting. The Member also queried whether a complaint was still considered if it was made to the authority via a Councillor. Members were advised that this would still be considered if the complaint fell under the complaints process.

A Member queried whether there were any collaborations with other authorities throughout Wales, with regards to the work and resources that are included in the complaints process. Members were advised that an 'All Wales Complaints Group' attended by Complaints Officers and the Ombudsman meet to share information, good practice and any issues which may affect other local authorities across Wales.

A Member sought clarification on where the Information Governance complaints data would be recorded. Members were advised that complaints regarding Freedom of Information, or Subject Access Requests, would be dealt with by way of an internal appeals process, which could progress to the Information Commissioner, if the complainant were dissatisfied with the appeal process. Members were also advised that the data on these complaints are reported in the six-monthly and annual directorate performance assessments.

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

7. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES: ANNUAL AUDIT PLAN 2024/25.

The Acting Internal Audit Manager introduced the report which sought the Committee's approval of the Internal Audit Services Annual Audit Plan for the 2024/25 financial year. Members were advised that the Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for ensuring that risk and internal controls are adequately managed and monitored, and that the work planned by Internal Audit will achieve the required levels of assurance.

Members were also advised that the report provided details of the resources available and planned work programme for Internal Audit Services for 2024/25.

A Member proposed that the wording of the recommendation be changed to 'consider and approve' instead of 'consider and endorse.' Members were advised that this would be amended and reflected in the minutes of the meeting. The Member also sought clarification on the audit work brought forward for 2023/24 and the allocated 50 days for this work, together with a Risk Management audit and the work involved in the 30 days allocated for this work. The Member also referred to the audit of 'other business units/establishments' and sought clarification on the types of audit work planned for these.

Members were advised that a number of audits were still ongoing from 2023/24 including the National Fraud Initiative Data Matching Sets, HMRC, Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Housing Benefit data, together with Payroll, Purchase Ledger, Companies House and VAT mismatches. Members were advised that the Risk Management audit would be looking at the processes used to identify risks and how these would be mitigated. Members were also advised that the reference to 'business units' was regarding social services, tourism, countryside and other locations, whereby an audit presence on site had been requested, to look at basic irregularity processes including accounting, and identify the

processes followed and records kept.

A Member sought clarification on the IT and Cyber Security audit planned, and whether the specialist capacity for this type of audit was available 'in-house.' Members were advised that the audit would be at a basic level and would include checks on passwords security and monitoring scam emails. Members were also assured that IT technical staff were in post to deal with cyber security and that external agencies were also used to test the network at a more technical level. Members were also referred to an ongoing IT audit by Audit Wales, in relation to Cyber Security.

Having considered the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation be approved. By way of Microsoft Forms and verbal confirmation, this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED to endorse the Internal Audit Services Annual Audit Plan for the 2024/25 financial year, subject to the amendment to change the wording of endorsed to approved.

8. INFORMATION ITEM

It was confirmed that the following item had not been called forward for discussion at the meeting, and the Committee noted the content of the report:-

- (i) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

The Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and contributions and the meeting closed at 3.06 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 4th June 2024.

CHAIR