

**MINUTES OF THE
AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE**
held on 16 March 2022 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor N.M. Walsh (Chair)
Councillor M. Sismey (Vice Chair)

Councillors D.J.R. Clark, J.M.C. Raven, E.J. Sampson, A.B. Sosin and A. Thorpe-Apps

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dudley and Galley.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 15 December 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interests

All Members were reminded to disclose any interests in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they should do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. They were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the meeting, if they had not been previously notified.

4. Public Questions

There were no questions or statements from members of the public.

5. Announcements

No announcements were made.

6. External Audit Verbal Update

The Section 151 officer updated the Committee on the progress made by the external auditors. It was noted that further deadlines had been missed by the external auditors and officers therefore felt that them attending the meeting was not the best use of their resources. The Committee was informed that the continued missed deadlines had led to a much higher workload for Council staff and that the budget had been set on unaudited accounts. It was noted that Chelmsford was not alone however and that only 9% of Council's had completed their audits on time.

The Committee heard that a new deadline had been agreed of 31st March 2022 with the external auditors. Officers believed this was a realistic deadline but noted that the high workloads remaining. It was noted therefore that an additional meeting of the Committee would be required in late April for the Committee to sign off the accounts. The Committee heard it would be very important for the external auditors to explain anything they've found and for them to also explain the delays and how deadlines would be met in the future. The Committee agreed to hold an additional meeting on 27th April 2022.

RESOLVED that

1. the update be noted and;
2. an additional meeting of the Committee be held on 27th April 2022.

(7.02pm to 7.07pm)

7. Internal Audit Annual Plan 2022/23 and Internal Audit Charter 2022

The Committee received a report detailing the Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23, and were asked to take into account the budget and resourcing required for delivery, as well as note and approve the Internal Audit Charter. The Committee was informed that the attached plan was based on a prioritisation of the audit universe. This included using a risk-based methodology, with input from the 'Our Chelmsford Our Plan' document, the principal risk register, discussions with staff and consideration of local and national issues and risks. The Committee noted that discussions had been held with senior management during the start of 2022 and that Management Team had approved the plan on the 23rd of February 2022.

The Committee heard that the plan focused resources where it would be needed most and that the service was provided by a small in-house team. It was also noted that an additional budget was available for contingency purposes or if specialist resources were required. It was also noted that a small-time contingency had been built into the plan for any ad hoc or urgent requirements. Deferrals from 2021/22 have also been included in the 2022/23 Plan. The Committee was also informed that the Internal Audit Charter was included in the report.

RESOLVED that the Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2022/23 and the Internal Audit Charter be noted.

(7.07pm to 7.13pm)

8. Accounting policies for the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts

The Committee received a report updating them on the Accounting Policies which would be used in completing the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts. It was noted that these were approved annually for each statement of accounts and that they represented the specific principles applied in producing the Statement of Accounts. It was noted that no significant changes had been made to the 2021/22 code. The report also updated members on the Government's emergency proposals for a code update, due to concerns about the number of audits not being delivered on time. It was noted that if the consultation led to any changes then the policies would need to be updated and if required they would be brought to the June meeting for further discussion. The Committee also noted the revised audit publication deadlines.

RESOLVED that

1. the accounting policies to be used in the preparation of the accounts be noted and;
2. the Committee note the proposed new national publication deadlines for the Statement of Accounts and their audit.

(7.14pm to 7.20pm)

9. Audit and Risk Committee Work Programme

The Committee received a report updating them on the rolling programme of work. It was noted that the previously discussed additional meeting on 27th April 2022 would be added to the programme. The Committee also heard that a further training questionnaire would be circulated soon

RESOLVED that the programme be agreed, with the additional 27th April 2022 meeting added.

(7.21pm to 7.23pm)

10. Urgent Business

There was no urgent business for the meeting.

The meeting closed at 7.23pm
Chair