

MINUTES

of the joint meeting of the

**AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE
COMMITTEES**

on 20 June 2018 at 7pm

Present:

Councillors R.H. Ambor, J.E. Chandler, J.A. Deakin, J. Galley, I.S. Grundy, P.V. Hughes, J. Jeapes G.B.R. Knight, R.J. Poulter, R.A. Ride, S.J. Robinson, G.I. Smith and M.D. Watson

Parish Councillors –

Councillor P.S. Jackson (Great Waltham Parish Council)

Also in Attendance -

Designated Independent Persons:

Mr. S. Anthony

1. **Election of Chairman**

RESOLVED that Councillor R.J. Poulter be elected as Chairman of this joint meeting.

At this point Councillor R.J. Poulter took the Chair.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Garrett and F.B. Mountain, Parish Councillors P.V. Brown and J. Saltmarsh and the Designated Independent Person C. Gosling. Councillors J. Jeapes and J.A. Deakin were appointed as the substitutes for Councillors C. Garrett and F.B. Mountain.

3. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the joint meeting of the Audit and Governance Committees held on 21 June 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. **Public Question Time**

No questions were asked or statements made by members of the public.

5. **Declarations of Interests**

All Members were reminded to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary interests or other registerable interests where appropriate in any items of business on the meeting's agenda. None were made.

6. **Review of Local Code of Corporate Governance and Annual Governance Statement 2017/18**

Members considered a report on the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance and the Annual Governance Statement 2017/18, which the Council's procedures required be approved at a joint meeting of the Audit and Governance Committees.

The Committee was informed that the CIPFA format had changed for last year's Annual Governance Statement and that this 2017/18 version followed the same format as last year's and that there had not been any significant changes to the document.

The Committee heard that the Chief Executive had introduced weekly statutory officer meetings for himself, the Monitoring Officer and the S151 Officer. The Committee heard that these had been introduced to allow the statutory officers to discuss current governance issues and to ensure that they were all up to date on any current or potential governance issues. The Monitoring Officer confirmed that these meetings had been very beneficial and provided a valuable opportunity to discuss key issues.

The Committee was informed that there had been no serious allegations of Councillor misconduct in 2017/18 and that one whistleblowing concern was still being considered by the external auditors. It was noted that the 2018/19 targets detailed in the Annual Governance Statement covered the Council's major projects and that the compliance for these would be looked at closely throughout the year. The Committee was informed that the Digital Transformation and Riverside redevelopment projects were subject to value for money reports by the external auditors and that these would be reported to the Audit Committee later in the year.

Following queries and comments from the Committee it was noted that;

- Training courses for Members were available through HR and that this was an area that had recently been looked at by a Task and Finish Group. It was confirmed that this was an area being looked at closely by officers especially with the likelihood of new members joining after the 2019 elections.
- The Citizens Panel had also been subject to a review by a Task and Finish Group and had recently been relaunched. The Committee heard that the panel now had over 600 Members and had been a valuable resource for the Council who were able to consult the members on upcoming issues or changes. It was noted that a quarterly newsletter was being sent to members of the panel and that the possibility of reconvening an annual meeting was being explored by officers.
- With regard to Paragraph 11.3 of the Annual Governance Statement, there was a concern that the Audit Plan was not being delivered on a Public Sector Internal Audit Standards compliant basis due to the fact it had not been subject to an EQA assessment. It was noted that this would be undertaken in July 2018. It was also confirmed that the Council's highest risks were now being focused on in the 2018/19 plan.
- The 'moderate assurance' level referred to in Paragraph 11.3 was developed from a tier of four levels ascending from no assurance to, limited assurance, to moderate assurance and then substantial assurance.
- With regard to paragraph 13.2 of the Annual Governance Statement, which detailed the important areas of governance for 2018/19, it was confirmed that Officers would explore the possibility of these being looked at by the Governance or Audit Committees. It was noted that the chief officers all had stakes in these targets and that their views would be sought on the matter with a report being taken to the next meeting of the Governance Committee.

The Committee agreed to delegate to the Director of Finance the authority to make any minor amendments to the Annual Governance Statement which may be required ahead of its final publication.

RESOLVED that;

1. The annual review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance is noted and the updated code attached as Appendix 1 is approved.
2. The Annual Governance Statement 2017/18 attached at Appendix 2 is approved for publication with the Statement of Accounts.
3. The Director of Finance after consultation with the Chairman of Audit or Governance Committee be granted authority to make any minor amendments to the Annual Governance Statement before its final publication.

7. **Urgent Business**

There were no matters of urgent business brought before the joint Committee.

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm.

Chairman