

GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2017 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor John Buckley (Chairman); Councillors Braidwood, Dexter, Edwards, Game, I Gregory, Hayton, Jaye-Jones, Larkins, L Piper and Taylor-Smith

In Attendance: Councillor Crow-Brown

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Campbell, for whom Councillor Fenner was present, and Councillor Connor.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Hayton proposed, Councillor Gregory seconded and Members agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2016.

4. EXTERNAL AUDIT GRANT CERTIFICATION LETTER 2015/16

Darren Wells, Grant Thornton UK LLP introduced the item which advised of the certification of Thanet District Council's Housing Benefit Subsidy claim.

During consideration of the item it was noted that:

- The Department for Work and Pensions provided specific requirements for the audit. Any error detected, regardless of value, generated additional testing.
- There were some communication inefficiencies which led to missed deadlines and additional, unplanned work by Grant Thornton.
- There would be a debrief meeting involving, Dover, Thanet and Canterbury Councils, East Kent Services and Grant Thornton to discuss lessons learned from the process.

Members noted the certification letter.

5. INTERNAL AUDIT 2017-18 AUDIT PLAN AND AUDIT CHARTER

Christine Parker, Head of the East Kent Audit Partnership (EKAP) introduced the Audit Charter and Internal Audit Plan 2017-18.

During consideration of the item, it was noted that:

- The Committee had previously agreed the Charter for three years in March 2016, however there had since been a number of changes to the document for Members to consider.
- The scheduling and frequency of audits shown in the Plan, were agreed in consultation with the Section 151(S151) Officer and were subject to regular review.

- It was agreed by the S151 Officers of Thanet, Shepway, Canterbury and Dover Council's not to undertake an external quality assessment of the EKAP. While this did not allow the EKAP to be fully compliant with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, it was felt that an external assessment would not provide sufficient benefit to offer value for money.

Councillor Gregory proposed, Councillor Larkins seconded and Members agreed the recommendations as shown in the report, namely:

1. That the Audit Charter be approved, for a period of 3 years from 2017-18, by Members.
2. That the 2017-18 Internal Audit Plan be approved by Members."

6. INTERNAL AUDIT QUARTERLY UPDATE

Simon Webb, Deputy Head of the EKAP, introduced the report noting that there had been nine internal audit assignments completed since the last committee meeting; six achieved substantial assurance, two achieved a limited assurance and there had been one assignment for which an assurance opinion was not applicable. There had also been six follow up reviews completed.

At the previous meeting of the Committee, Members requested an appropriate officer be invited to address Members' concerns that safeguarding had remained with limited assurance after audit follow up. Rob Kenyon, Director of Community Services advised the Committee of the actions implemented since the review, and of what further improvements were planned for the future.

Gavin Waite, Director of Operational Services addressed the Committee in regard to the concerns highlighted in the EKAP's audit of open spaces, playgrounds and street cleaning. In response to Members concerns, Mr Waite agreed to commission an independent safety assessment of the equipment at the Viking Ship Playground.

Members noted the report.

7. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL AUDIT ARRANGEMENT 2016/17

Tim Willis, Director of Corporate Resources introduced the item and advised that in his assessment, as S151 Officer, the Council had an effective internal audit process in place.

It was proposed by Councillor Game, seconded by Councillor Jaye-Jones and Members agreed:

"That Governance and Audit Committee accept the findings of the review of the effectiveness of the council's Internal Audit arrangements for 2016/17"

8. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN QUARTERLY UPDATE

Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance, introduced the report which provided an update on the Annual Governance Statement 2015/16 action plan.

Members noted the report.

9. GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK AND LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE UPDATE

Tim Howes introduced the report. It was noted that all Members would be made aware of the Code, and that it would be published on the Council's website.

It was proposed by Councillor Hayton, seconded by Councillor Larkin and Members agreed to approve the revised Local Code of Corporate Governance.

10. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER QUARTERLY UPDATE

Tim Willis introduced the report and noted where updates had been made. Mr Willis offered to hold a workshop for Members on risk, scheduled just before the start of the next committee meeting. Members were invited to offer Mr Willis suggestions for topics to be considered at the workshop.

Members noted the report.

11. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO COUNCIL - DRAFT

The Chairman introduced the report and requested comments from the Committee.

During discussion of the item it was noted that:

- There would be an amendment to the wording of the foreword from the chairman.
- The terms of reference of the Committee would be reviewed in 2017/18 in order to meet CIPFA guidance.

Members noted the Chairman's report.

Meeting concluded: 8.40 pm