

AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 25th June, 2018
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present:- Councillor Paul Waring – in the Chair

Councillors Dymond, Pickup, Stubbs, Mrs Burnett and Panter

Officers Executive Director (Resources and Support Services) - Kelvin Turner,
Geoff Durham - Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer,
Simon Sowerby- Business Improvement Manager and
Nesta Barker - Head of Environmental Health Services

Also in Attendance Mr P Butters – University of Keele
Mr P Jones – Grant Thornton

1. **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies.

2. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April, 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest stated.

4. **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

A copy of the revised Terms of Reference was presented to Members for information. This item was for information only, having previously been agreed by Council.

Resolved: That the Terms of Reference be noted.

5. **WORK PLAN 2018/19**

A copy of the Work Plan, for this Committee, for 2018/19 was presented to Members for information. The Plan was not exhaustive and could have items added as and when they arose.

Councillor Stubbs requested that, as 'Standards' matters were now in this Committee's remit, Standards training be arranged for members of the Committee.

Resolved: (i) That the work plan for 2018/19 be received.

- (ii) That Standards training be arranged for members of the Committee.

6. CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 4 2017/18

Consideration was given to a report informing Members of the progress made in enhancing and embedding risk management for the period January to March, 2018.

Members were advised that there were seventeen overdue risks – ten Planning and seven housing. All risks were due to resourcing issues.

There were no new risk level increases and no new risks had been identified.

Member's attention was drawn to item 5 on page 19 of the agenda. 'failure to achieve income targets'. This was due to volatility in the market place for dry recyclables' prices.

The Council's Business Improvement Manager advised members that this matter would be taken to the next Executive Management Team meeting for discussion.

Councillor Stubbs enquired whether the dry recyclable's issue should be recorded as high risk as prices would be unlikely to return to the previous prices.

With regard number 6 on page 20, Councillor Stubbs had two main areas of concern – the edge of the M6 motorway and Kidsgrove Town Centre. Nothing could be done with this within twelve months and therefore this should possibly also be high risk.

Members were advised that this would be reviewed and Members would be informed. In addition, two reports would be going to the Licensing and Public Protection Committee meeting on 27 June in respect of air quality.

Mr Butters stated that numbers 1-3 on pages 17 and 18 of the agenda had been at 9 for over twelve months – with a lot of activity undertaken to improve them. Members were advised that this would be looked at.

Resolved: That the report be received and the comments noted.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

Consideration was given to a report informing Members of issues and trends regarding health and safety at the Council.

A copy of the Annual Report was attached to the agenda.

Members noted the total days lost to accidents at 344 days. This was due to long term lost time accidents.

Members requested that the trends be monitored.

Members asked if there had been any compensation claims in respect of accidents. Councillor Stubbs stated that if there were a significant number of insurance claims coming in they should be reported to this Committee.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

Consideration was given to a report outlining the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2017/18.

Members' attention was drawn to the table on page 32. The chart showed a total debt of £2.5m at 31 March, 2018. This amount had been borrowed by the Council on 20 March, 2018 and paid back in full on 3 April, 2018. The reason for the borrowing was to cover a period where no Council Tax or Business Rates were coming in.

Resolved: That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2017/18 received and be reported to Full Council on 19 July, 2018.

9. DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2017/18

Consideration was given to a report outlining the draft Statement of Accounts 2017/18 and the financial position at 31 March, 2018.

The Council's Executive Director for Resources and Support Services gave credit to the Council's Head of Finance and his team for the work that had been carried out on this.

This was the first year that the new deadline for producing the accounts had come into force although the Council had successfully carried out dry runs for the past couple of years.

Previously, the Auditors had until the end of September to sign off the accounts but it was now the end of July.

Councillor Pickup enquired about the impairment charge of £844,000 relating to expenditure on Castle House. The Council's Head of Finance would be asked to circulate to Members how this had been calculated. Councillor Stubbs made reference to paragraphs 4.3 and 4.4 on page 42 of the agenda enquiring what the collection rate was for Council Tax at Newcastle. Members were advised that it was over ninety-seven percent.

Resolved: That the information be noted.

10. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2017/18

Consideration was given to a report requesting approval of the Annual Governance Statement 2016/17 for inclusion in the financial statements.

Members were advised that the main change from last year had been the Scallan report, outlined at paragraph 4.15 of Appendix A.

Councillor Stubbs was concerned that complaints about the Council's Constitution had not been listed. Reference needed to be made on how the Constitution would be managed going forward.

At Annual Council in May, Members had agreed that the Constitution and Member Support Working Group be resumed. Councillor Stubbs suggested that a meeting of the Group be held as soon as possible.

Members were advised that the Statement had been signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

Resolved: That the Annual Governance Statement for 2017/18 be approved in principle subject to a meeting of the Constitution and Member Support Working Group being held as soon as possible..

11. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report informing Members of the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2018/19 and seeking approval of the contents.

Members were advised that Mr Peter Harrison – Director at TIAA Ltd had produced the report to the Committee having reviewed all of the necessary documents. Mr Harrison would probably carry out some other pieces of work for the council in the interim.

Members were advised that Mr Harrison was not being paid at consultancy rates – just the ‘going rate’.

Resolved: (i) That the Internal Audit Plan for 2018/19 be approved.
(ii) That the continuation of the reporting arrangements as set out in the report, be agreed.

12. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

COUNCILLOR PAUL WARING
Chair

Meeting concluded at 7.45 pm