

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

Thursday, 16th April, 2015

Present:- Councillor John Taylor – in the Chair
Councillors Loades, Mrs Burgess, Jones and Mrs Hambleton
Co-optee Mr Phil Butters- University of Keele

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Sweeney.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 February, 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Members raised a question on item 7 of the Minutes, the Internal Audit Progress Report. It was queried as to whether any further progress had been made regarding an action plan. The Audit Manager stated that this would be done as part of the quarterly progress report at the next meeting.

Resolved: That the information be received.

5. CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT

Consideration was given to a report which reviewed the Risk Management Policy Statement and Strategy Documents.

Members were advised that there had been no changes from the previous year and that, if agreed, the Strategy would be sent to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive for signing off before being put onto the Council's website.

Resolved:

- (i) That the current Risk Management Policy and Strategy for 2015/16 be approved.
- (ii) That the Risk Management Policy Statement be signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

6. GRANT THORNTON - AUDIT PLAN FOR NEWCASTLE UNDER LYME

Members considered Grant Thornton's Audit Plan for Newcastle Borough Council for the year ending 31 March, 2015.

There had been a slight change to the Plan with a prepayment of pension contributions being made up to 2017.

Risks which had been identified included employee remuneration and welfare contributions.

The report identified four areas for consideration:

- Awareness of fraud and suspected fraud.
- Views about the risks of fraud.
- Awareness of whistleblower tips or complaints.
- How the Audit and Risk Committee provide oversight of management's fraud risk assessment process.

Resolved: (i) That the report be received.
 (ii) That the four areas identified for consideration above, be agreed.

7. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Consideration was given to a report to remind Members of the requirements of the Code of Corporate Governance. In adopting the Code, the Council can demonstrate that it is committed to ensuring that Good Governance is delivered.

The Council's Audit Manager stated that there had been no updates or changes to the Code.

The Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee would be asked to sign a letter in order that a copy of the Code could be sent to Members.

Resolved: (i) That the requirements of the Code of Corporate Governance be noted.
 (ii) That, a covering letter, signed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee should be sent to all Members reminding them that copy of the Code of Corporate Governance will be available in the Members' area on the Council's Intranet site.

8. ANTI MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY

Consideration was given to a report regarding the Council's Anti Money Laundering Policy which outlines the commitment of the Council in maintaining high ethical standards in its' administration of public funds.

The Policy formed part of the Council's Annual Review and Members were advised that there had been no changes, therefore the Policy remained the same.

Members were also advised that, in future the Policy would be reviewed every two years instead of annually.

The Audit Manager was asked how officers were made aware of the Policy. This was achieved through poster campaign and survey and there were also online training packages available.

Members asked if any training given to officers to could be offered to elected Members. This was confirmed.

Resolved: That the Anti-Money Laundering Policy be Approved.

9. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ANTI-FRAUD AND ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

Consideration was given to the review of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework.

The Whistleblowing Policy had been updated to incorporate safeguarding for harassment or victimisation, confidentiality and anonymous allegations.

Resolved: That the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework, the Whistleblowing Policy and the Fraud Response Plan be approved.

10. APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT MEMBER

Members were advised that the co-option term was coming to an end for the current Independent Member, Mr Phil Butters.

Good practice guidance recommends that the Audit and Risk Committee would benefit from having independent members.

All Members agreed that the current Independent Member should be co-opted onto this Committee for a further three year period.

Resolved: That the current Independent Member be co-opted onto this Committee for a period of three years.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked all Members for their contributions and commitment over the last twelve months.

Councillor Loades thanked the Chair for his work and support and the efficiency with which he has handled his Chairmanship.

Resolved: That the comments be noted.

COUNCILLOR JOHN TAYLOR
Chair