

AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 15th April, 2019
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present:- Councillor Paul Waring – in the Chair

Councillors S. Dymond, S. Pickup, M. Stubbs, G. Burnett and K.Owen

Officers Geoff Durham - Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer,
Simon Sowerby- Business Improvement Manager,
Partnerships Manager - Sarah Moore and
Sarah Wilkes - Finance Manager

Also in Attendance Claire Potts – Head of Internal Audit – Stoke on Trent City Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr P Butters

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF A PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February, 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Safeguarding:

The Council's Partnerships Manager, Sarah Moore advised Members about Safeguarding training.

The Council provided basic safeguarding training and had provided two e-learning modules – one relating to children and one to adults. A session has been arranged for 24 July prior to full council.

All Members are expected to attend as variations of the training may have been offered at their work place which may not cover everything that is required for a Councillor.

The Chair stated that Group Leaders would be notified to ensure the best attendance.

5. **CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 2019 (QUARTER 4 (Q4))**

Consideration was given to a report informing Members of the progress made by the Council in enhancing and embedding risk management for the period January to March, 2019.

Members were advised that there were no overdue risk reviews. There had a number of risk level increases and these were outlined in Appendix A. There had been four new risks identified, only one being a high risk. There were no outstanding issues.

Councillor Stubbs queried number 4, Failure to comply with relevant health and safety legislation, asking if it was an actual failure or an accident. Members were advised that it was an accident which had been investigated and found that all safety systems were in place and were working.

Councillor Stubbs stated that this should not have been recorded as a failure but as an accident. The Chair advised that it was to do with the software that was used and the procedures which had to be followed.

Councillor Stubbs felt that the narrative used for the risks could misinterpret the risks to anyone reading this from outside.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That point 2.1.1 showing the number of overdue risks be noted.
 - (ii) That point 2.2.1 advising of the risk level increases be noted.
 - (iii) That point 2.2.2 regarding the new risks identified between January and March, 2019 be noted.
 - (iv) That point 2.2.4 be noted.
 - (vi) That Appendix A be noted.

6. **AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT AND SECTOR UPDATE**

Mr Phil Jones of Grant Thornton explained the Audit Progress Report and Sector update for the year ending 31 March, 2019.

Members' attention was drawn to page 26 of the agenda which gave an overview of the main areas that had been looked at.

Reference was also made to page 29 of the agenda – Emerging accounting issues regarding the Council's interest in Castle House and valuation of the former Civic Offices site. The Council's Finance Manager, Sarah Wilkes confirmed that District Audit had been to value Castle House last week and the figures were awaited.

Regarding the Civic Offices, the council's Property Section had carried out a valuation, taking into account the issues with the asbestos. These figures were also awaited.

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

7. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

The Head of Internal Audit at Stoke on Trent City Council, Claire Potts introduced a report informing Members of the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2019-20 and to seek approval on its contents.

Members were advised that the Plan had been produced by Stoke City Council and that they were offering their support.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph 9 and Appendix A of the report which outlined the work that would be carried out in 2019/20.

Councillor Stubbs enquired why only 5 days had been allocated to Brexit. The Council's chief Executive, Martin Hamilton stated that the figures did not reflect the amount of work that had gone on in preparation for Brexit.

Members were advised that the figures were open to amendment if required.

- Resolved:**
- (i) That, in accordance with the Committee's terms of reference, the Internal Audit Plan for 2019/20, be approved.
 - (ii) That the Internal Audit Charter for 2019/20 which sets out how the plan will be delivered, be approved.
 - (iii) That the Committee receive quarterly reports on the delivery of the assignments within the plan and on the implementation of actions arising.

8. COUNTER FRAUD ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to a report regarding Counter Fraud Arrangements:

- Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework 2019-20
- Fraud Response Plan 2019-20
- The Whistleblowing Policy 2019-20
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy 2019-20

The above documents are regularly reviewed and Members were advised that the only changes made to the documents were in respect of officer's names.

Councillor Stubbs felt that officers should be made aware of these documents more than once per year.

Councillor Pickup stated that she was surprised that the council would take up to £2000 in cash and asked if other authorities could be contacted to ascertain what they accepted.

Resolved: That the following policies which support the Counter Fraud function be noted:

- Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework 2019-20
- Fraud Response Plan 2019-20
- The Whistleblowing Policy 2019-20

- Anti-Money Laundering Policy 2019-20.

9. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Business.

COUNCILLOR PAUL WARING
Chair

Meeting concluded at 7.47 pm