

AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Monday, 24th June, 2019
Time of Commencement: 7.00 pm

Present:- Councillor Paul Waring – in the Chair

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

Officers Geoff Durham - Mayor's Secretary / Member Support Officer, Simon Sowerby- Business Improvement Manager, Jan Willis - Interim Executive Director - Resources and Support Services, Nesta Barker - Head of Environmental Health Services, Craig Turner - Principal Accountant and Sarah Wilkes - Finance Manager

Also in Attendance Ms Tess Barker-Phillips (Grant Thornton)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Stubbs and Mr Phil Butters –University of Keele

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April, 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

At the previous meeting, with regard to item 8, Councillor Pickup had asked for other local authorities to be contacted to ascertain the amount of cash that would be accepted:

Stoke on Trent City Council £8000
Tamworth Borough Council £2000
Lichfield District Council £2000
Staffs Moorlands District Council £2000
Stafford Borough council £2000.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Resolved: That the Terms of Reference for this Committee be received.

6. CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 4 2018/19

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

Members were advised that the only changes made to the Risk Management Policy Statement were in regard to key dates and corporate priorities.

The document had been received by the Leader of the Council – Councillor Simon Tagg and the Chief Executive, Martin Hamilton who had signed off the document.

Members' attention was drawn to the Risk Management Strategy for 2019/20 and its appendices.

Resolved: That the current Risk Management Policy and Strategy for the 2019/20 year, subject to changes listed in the documents be noted and that it be also noted that the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council have agreed and signed the Risk Management Policy Statement.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

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' attention was drawn to paragraph 2.1 of the Annual Report relating to the health and safety arrangements for Castle House which had now been completed.

Paragraph 2.3 referred to the Drug, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy and included arrangements for the testing of employees. The Chair asked if it had been suggested to test the Members too? The Council's Head of Environmental Health Services, Nesta Barker stated that it tended to be where there was known to be a problem or where it involved a high risk job.

Table 5.1 showed the number of employee accidents which remained low

Section 13 referred to corporate health and safety delivery and a review undertaken on health and safety arrangements. Members were advised that the Council now had a permanent full-time employee to deliver this service.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report outlining the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2018/19.

Members' attention was drawn to the table on page 72. The chart showed a total debt of £0m at 31 March, 2019. No investments were held as at that date.

Resolved: That the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2018/19 received and be reported to Full Council on 24 July, 2019.

9. DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report outlining the draft Statement of Accounts 2018/19 and the financial position at 31 March, 2019.

Members were advised that the Draft Statement of Accounts for 2018/19 was included in the Supplementary Agenda.

Attention was drawn to paragraph 2.2 referring to a small variable outturn of £8155 and the tables at paragraph 3.1 showing variances and additional expenditure.

Resolved: That the information in respect of the outturn and key issues in respect of the Council's financial position as at 31 March, 2019 be noted.

10. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report requesting approval of the Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 for inclusion in the financial statements.

Members' attention was drawn paragraph 5 of Appendix A.

The Council's Interim Executive Director –Resources and Support |Services, Jan Willis advised that the Council's turnover had been affected by various interim arrangements throughout 2018/19 and continuing into this year.

In addition, the Council's Constitution needed to be brought up to date and the Council's Interim Head of Legal/Monitoring Officer, Caroline Elwood had been tasked with this.

Fraud was also being focussed on and the Council was soon to enter into partnership with Stoke on Trent City council to enhance our capabilities.

Resolved: That the Annual Governance Statement for 2018/19 be approved.

11. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2019/20

Consideration was given to a report informing Members of the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2019/20

The Chair advised that this had been considered at the last meeting of this Committee and there had been no changes.

Resolved: That the information be received.

12. WORK PLAN 2019/20

A copy of the Work Plan, for this Committee, for 2019/20 was presented to Members for information. The Plan was not exhaustive and could have items added as and when they arose.

Resolved: (i) That the work plan for 2019/20 be received.

13. **URGENT BUSINESS**

Ms Willis advised the Committee of an issue that had arisen regarding a legal judgement that could affect the Council's Pension fund Liabilities.

Grant Thornton had been in touch to look into this but there was still uncertainty as to the impact that it would have. As a result the 'audit opinion' may not be available by 1 July, 2019.

Tess Barker-Phillips of Grant Thornton stated that the legal judgement related to an age discrimination issue within the police and fire services. They had appealed and they won there would be no liability.

COUNCILLOR PAUL WARING
Chair

Meeting concluded at 7.25 pm