

Audit and Standards Committee

The committee has met on 1st May and 27th July 2020.

During the course of the meetings, the business dealt with was as follows:

1st May 2020

Members reviewed the Internal Audit Plan for the current year. There was uncertainty given the current situation with Covid-19, in relation to how the plan would roll out. It was accepted that it may be subject to change, but it was approved on this basis together with the Audit Charter for 2020/21.

The Head of Environmental Health Services introduced a report revising the scheme of delegation relating to taxi and private hire licences. It was resolved that the committee supports the amendments as tabled.

Members were advised of a number of amendments to the Audit Plan. Grant Thornton explained the changes, primarily in relation to home-working and it was not envisaged that there would be any overrun on the previously submitted timetable.

27th July 2020

Members reviewed the Draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020. It was explained that under the revised regulations (due to Covid-19), the deadline for completion/signing-off of the accounts had been extended to 30th November (from 30th September). The Head of Finance explained that the out-turn, subject to completion of the Audit, showed a negative variance of £0.207M which had been transferred from the General Reserve. Conversely, the Collection Fund was showing a surplus of £3.977M which would be transferred to the Business Reserve in order to help to offset the effects of Covid-19. Members were given details of the balance sheet accounts and advised that there were sufficient reserves to cover losses incurred during the current year, but work was being carried out in relation to resilience issues going forward as the impact of Covid-19 was not yet known, nor the level of Government support. The contents of the report were noted and Officers thanked for all of their efforts under these difficult circumstances.

Members received the Treasury Management report for 2019/20 and there were no issues to report as the council had no cash investments or any significant borrowing at the year-end.

The Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20 was approved, as required and the additional section relation to Covid-19, noted.

The Risk Management report for Q4 19/20 and Q1 20/21 was presented in revised format which was felt to be an improvement. Approval was given to various appendices as necessary, and it was agreed that future reports include a rider clarifying that whilst the Council may be able to mitigate risk, it could not do the same with impact.

The Head of Finance explained the current Counter Fraud Arrangements which comprise an Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework, a Fraud Response Plan, a Whistleblowing Policy and an Anti-Money Laundering Policy.

Members noted the contents of the Annual Health and Safety Report, 2019/20, which showed a slight increase in the number of accidents, but no worrying trends.

Next Meeting 28th September 2020.

Paul Waring (Chair)