

REGULATORY COMMITTEES CHAIR'S REPORTS

Audit and Standards Committee

The Committee met on 25th April 2022 and 27th June 2022.

25th April 2022 meeting

Harkamal Vaid of Grant Thornton presented two documents to members, the first being, Informing the audit risk assessment 2021/22, a document designed to contribute to the mutual understanding of the audit process between auditor and client. The Audit plan 2021/22 was then reviewed, based on the information gleaned from the previous document.

Members then considered the Internal Audit Annual Report 2021/22 and Audit Opinion as presented by Clare Potts, Chief Internal Auditor. Clare reported that there had only been one negative opinion, relating to GDPR and that this would be the subject of further audit work in 2022/23, to ensure that changes to practises had been implemented to an appropriate standard. The Audit Opinion was found to be "satisfactory" meaning that the council was deemed to have an adequate, effective and reliable framework of internal control.

Clare then presented the Internal Audit Plan and Charter 2022/23 (noting that a key area for audit would be the One Council programme). Members approved the Audit Plan and Charter and agreed the continuation of quarterly reports to the committee.

The Finance Manager presented policies relating to various counter-fraud arrangements as follows, which were noted by members.

Anti-fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework
Fraud Response Plan
Whistleblowing Policy
Anti-Money Laundering Policy

Members then took an in-depth look at the risk profiles relating to cyber risk and data breach as requested by the committee at the previous meeting.

27th June 2022 meeting

Prior to the meeting, an in-depth training session was held for members and substitutes of the committee. The training was carried out by Clare Potts (Chief Internal Auditor) and Sarah Wilkes (s151 Officer).

Members received a zoom presentation of the Health and Safety Annual Report 2021/22 which showed no undue increases in the number of accidents and reflected the Council's good control of Health and Safety.

Sarah Wilkes then presented the Annual Governance Statement 2021/22, which was largely similar to previous years. This was approved by members.

Members then reviewed and approved the Proposed Accounting Policies, Critical Accounting Judgements and Sources of Estimation Uncertainty for the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts. Authority to make future changes to these, as a result of new or updated guidance, was given to the S151 Officer on the proviso that any such changes would be brought to the attention of the committee at the first available opportunity.

The Draft Statement of Accounts 2021/22 was then presented to members who approved the document for Audit and Publication. The final version of the Audited Accounts and Audit Report will come back to the committee at a later date.

The Treasury Management Annual Report 2021/22 was presented and it was noted that the council currently has no borrowing, but in the light of various large-scale projects, this may be a likelihood in the future.

Cllr Paul Waring
Chair

Licensing and Public Protection Committee

Since the last Full Council there has been one main Licensing and Public Protection Committee which was held on Tuesday, 28th June 2022

In this meeting Members received updates on new pieces of Legislations for Taxis and Private hire vehicles (safeguarding and road safety) Act,2022 and Taxis and Private hire vehicles (disabled persons) Act,2022.

The following items were discussed and all were resolved that the contents of the reports were noted-

1. TAXI BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE CONSULTATION
2. PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE
3. APPEALS UPDATE
4. DRINK SPIKING

There have been three sub-committees held since the last Full Council meeting and the Minutes made available to the main committee.

Cllr Andrew Parker
Chair

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee have met for the first and second time of its new cycle , on the 26th of May and 21st of June respectively - since being formed at Full Council.

The Chair welcomed all new members and those returning who had been reappointed to the Committee.

The new times and dates of potential site visits were agreed for the municipal year. 2022/2023.

Business over the two meetings had been lighter than usual but members have deliberated on three Major and two Minor applications. Members have received updates on enforcement items brought to the Committee and resolved to keep monitoring this area with further updates to be provided to the committee over the next two meetings.

Members discussed and received several reports to the committee the main one being, the Planning area Annual Development Management Performance Report 2021/2022 and were pleased to see that that performance relating to Major and non-Major applications targets had remained on track and were in the top percentile compared to some authorities despite the challenges from the effects of a national pandemic in 2021. Officers were able to carry on working exceptionally efficiently towards meeting the Council's targets during this time. It was noted that the number of enforcement cases reported had increased significantly during lockdown as more residents became more aware of what was happening in terms of planning activities in their areas. Officers across the planning area had made a concerted response to bring the overall total number of open cases down which was shown to have been effective but still needs to be compounded and monitored moving forward.

The Chair and committee commended and thanked officers for their excellent work across all areas which will hopefully provide the benchmark for this in the future.

Updates were received on the recent appeal ruling on the enforcement action being taken on land at Hazeley Paddocks, Keele Road, Keele, and a breach of Planning obligations at the former Silverdale Station and Goods Shed site.

The Chair stated that there had been some good debates on items considered at the two meetings which boded well for future meetings.

Cllr Paul Northcott
Chair