

REGULATORY COMMITTEES CHAIR'S REPORTS

Licensing and Public Protection Committee

The Licensing and Public Protection Committee has met twice since the Full Council meeting held on Wednesday 5th April 2023. Firstly, on Wednesday 10th May 2023 and again on Tuesday 4th July 2023.

In the meeting held on 10th May the Committee received a Regulatory Easements Consultation for the Licensing Act 2003. Members noted and approved the report and consultation responses.

The Committee also discussed the following:

- Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Safeguarding and Road Safety) Act 2022;
- Update on results of Taxi Licensing Appeals;
- Public Space Protection Order Public Consultation Update;
- Public Space Protection Orders: Parks and Open Spaces.

Members agreed and approved the recommendations that were set out in those reports.

In the meeting held on 4th July the Committee considered the following reports:

- Food Safety Service Plan 2023/24 and Review of Performance 2022/23;
- Update on Results of Taxi Licensing Appeals;
- Proposed Changes to Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNS);
- Public Space Protection Orders: Parks and Open Spaces. After a lengthy discussion, Members noted the recommendations.

The Committee also approved the recommendations for 3 other reports.

Since the Full Council meeting held on Wednesday 5th April the Licensing Sub Committee has met once and the Public Protection Sub Committee have met twice.

The minutes for the Licensing Sub Committee held on Tuesday 21st March were made available to the main Committee at the meeting held on 10th May and the minutes for the Licensing Sub Committee held on 10th May were made available to the main Committee at the meeting held on 4th July. Members noted those minutes at the relevant meetings.

The minutes for the Public Protection Sub Committee held on the 7th June were made available to the main Committee held on 4th July and Members noted them as a correct record.

Cllr Andrew Parker
Chair

Audit and Standards Committee

The Committee met on 17th April , 30th May and 17 July, 2023.

17th April 2023 Meeting

As had previously been agreed, the meeting was preceded by a training session split into accounting, internal audit and risk management to provide refresher training for existing and new committee members.

The Chief Internal Auditor then presented the Internal Audit Plan and Charter 2023/24, noting that some consultancy work may also be carried out during the year. Questions were put in relation to major risks and the contractual relationship between the Borough and Internal Audit based at SOT CC. The Chair asked that when the Audit of Town Deal projects had been concluded, the findings be shared with the committee, due to the size and importance of the projects. Members approved the plan and Charter as presented.

The S151 Officer, Sarah Wilkes, then described the Corporate Fraud (avoidance) arrangements in place for the coming year and members were asked to note the policies contained within the document.

Members were now asked to review and approve the Risk Management Policy and Strategy for the 2023/24 year noting the revised evaluation matrix now in use. Members approved and accepted the recommendations as written.

Andrew Smith, representing our External Auditor, Grant Thornton, gave an overview of the External Audit Report 2021/22, much of which had been seen in earlier reports to the Council. He reiterated their view that no significant weaknesses exist in relation to the Council's value for money arrangements and although they had raised 9 improvement recommendations, these were to strengthen the already strong controls and procedures currently in place.

Due to changes in timetabling of the forthcoming Audit of the 2022/23 Accounts the Chair asked members to agree to the re-scheduling of the next two meetings with the next to be on 30th May with a date to be notified for the subsequent meeting.

30th May 2023 Meeting

Members were initially informed of the Accounting policies intended to be used in the preparation of the 2022/23 Accounts. Whilst largely similar to the previous year, it was noted that one policy, felt by the External Auditors, to be superfluous had now been removed. Members agreed to approve the policies.

The Annual Governance Statement was now introduced by Sarah Wilkes describing its purpose for the benefit of the members present and this was approved by the Committee.

Next members were asked to note and approve the Draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23 for publication and Audit. The Chair congratulated the team for its hard work and organisational skills in managing to get the accounts prepared within the deadline, ie in half the time allowed for the previous year, something that many other

councils were not expected to manage. Members shared the Chair's sentiments and agreed to note and approve the Accounts as presented.

The Monitoring Officer now asked Members to note the Updated Finance and Contract Procedure Rules. This is an updated suite following on from the updated Constitution and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Chair remarked on the clarity and overall usability of the document which it was felt would provide a very clear guide to Members and Officers as to where limits and responsibilities lie. Overall an excellent piece of work for which the Officers should be congratulated.

It was confirmed that the revised date for the next meeting would now be 17th July 2023 and Members were asked to note that the following meeting, currently scheduled for 11th September 2023, might need to be moved back slightly to allow approval of the Accounts in time for the 30th September deadline.

Paul Waring
Chair of Audit and Standards Committee.