

AUDIT COMMITTEE

6.10 P.M.

27TH AUGUST 2020

PRESENT:- Councillors Paul Stubbins (Chair), Stephie Barber, Abbott Bryning, Oliver Robinson, David Whitworth, Katie Whearty and Jason Firth (Substitute for Councillor Knight)

Apologies for Absence:
Councillor Geoff Knight

Officers in attendance:

Joanne Billington	Internal Audit and Assurance Manager (IAAM)
Paul Thompson	Chief Financial Officer (Head of Finance / Section 151 Officer) CFO
Mark Davies	Director Communities & the Environment
Steve Simpson	Head of ICT
Jenny Kay	Civic & Ceremonial Democratic Support Officer
Eric Marsden	Democratic Support Officer

Also in attendance:

Paul Hewitson	Deloitte LLP
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10 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Committee were informed that Councillor Anne Whitehead, who had been appointed as Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2020-21 at the meeting of 22nd July 2020, had now joined the Cabinet. Councillor Whitehead was therefore no longer eligible to be Vice-Chair.

The Chair requested nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee for the municipal year 2020-21.

It was proposed and seconded:

“That Councillor Geoff Knight be appointed Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee for the municipal year 2020-21”.

There being no further nominations, the Chair declared the proposal to be carried.

Resolved:

That Councillor Geoff Knight be appointed Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee for the municipal year 2020-21.

COUNCILLOR ABBOTT BRYNING JOINED THE MEETING AT 6:15 P.M.

11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22nd July 2020 were agreed as a true record, and

would be signed by the Chair at a later date.

12 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

14 REVISED 2020/21 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

The IAAM submitted a report with a revised 2020-21 Internal Audit Plan. The IAAM informed the Committee that the revised plan was necessary following the redeployment of the IAAM and Principal Auditor to other roles during the Covid-19 pandemic between 1 April and 31 July, and the withdrawal of Lancashire County Council from assisting with the delivery of the original plan (approved at the meeting of 19th February 2020).

Appendix A of the revised plan identified the areas of work that could be achieved, given the time and resources still available, to deliver an annual internal audit opinion which would be key evidence for the Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21.

In response to questions from the Committee, the IAAM advised that the withdrawal was due to the resources of the County Council being stretched, and was common with all local authorities. Should this situation change, and more resources become available, the plan could be revised again. Achieving assurance would likely require more work with Heads of Service.

The IAAM confirmed that the rolling out of risk management training and implementation of operational risk registers was still a priority, but did require the prior return of staff in other services who had also been redeployed during the pandemic. A quarterly report on progress would be submitted at the November 2020 meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Audit Committee approve the revised 2020-21 Internal Audit Plan.
- (2) That the Audit Committee note that Lancashire County Council will no longer be providing assistance to complete the revised audit plan.

15 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20

Prior to the presentation of the report to the Committee on the preparation of the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020, the CFO informed the Committee that he wished to record his thanks to all of the Finance team including Principal Accountants Andrew Kipling and especially Elaine Dowling, who through their dedication, hard work and determination had produced the draft Statement of Accounts during the exceptional circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The CFO advised the Committee that the draft Statement of Accounts would be published on the Council website prior to the revised deadline of 31st August 2020 (revised by the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020). Confirmation would be sent by email to all Councillors, with a web-link (paper copies

available by request). Training for Committee members on local government accounts was ongoing and would continue.

Following questions from the Committee, the External Auditor responded that in the interests of transparency, and given current resources, it was unlikely that an external audit could be delivered to the timescale of the end of November. Whilst preparatory work could begin earlier, it was probable that December would be the earliest the audit could be undertaken. Discussions on timetabling the audit would continue between the External Auditor and the CFO.

Resolved:

That the Audit Committee notes the details on the preparation of the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020 and that a further report to approve the audited statement of accounts be produced for the next meeting of the Committee.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 6.45 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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