

AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 AUGUST 2023

Present:

Councillors Jackman, Morgan, Radford, Sanders, Thorne and Williams

Members in Attendance:

Councillors

Apologies:

Councillors Daws and Purser

Officers in Attendance:

Martin Flitcroft, Chief Finance Officer & Head of Corporate Services

Sue Heath, Audit Manager

Sarah Selway, Democratic Services Team Leader & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Christopher Morgan, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

Paul Woodhead, Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer to the Council

Julie Masci, External Auditor

29. ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was proposed by Councillor Jackman and seconded by Councillor Thorne that Councillor Morgan be elected Chair of Audit Scrutiny Committee 2023-24

A vote was taken – the result was unanimously in favour.

Resolved that Councillor Morgan be elected Chair of Audit Scrutiny Committee 2023-24

30. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

It was proposed by Councillor Morgan and seconded by Councillor Jackman that Councillor Thorne be elected Vice-Chair of Audit Scrutiny Committee 2023-24

A vote was taken – the result was unanimously in favour.

Resolved that Councillor Thorne be elected Vice-Chair of Audit Scrutiny Committee 2023-24

31. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by Councillor Morgan and seconded by Councillor Sanders that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

A vote was taken.

Resolved

That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

The Vice-Chair informed the Committee that he was an Exeter Community Champion. This did not affect his right to speak or vote.

33. GRANT THORNTON AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

The External Auditor introduced the report to the Committee. The full details of the External Audit can be read in the agenda report. Improvements in whistleblowing policy had come as a result of the work done by Protect. Comments from Management were being obtained for the 2020-2021 audit. The property list was largely fixed and the asset list was monitored, as economic fluctuations would change the value of said assets. The External Audit had now moved on from 2021. Audit reports could be made available to the Committee earlier where possible. It was noted that as the audit progressed for the next year or so, council improvements would be shown, including in management comments.

It was proposed by Cllr Morgan and seconded by Cllr Thorne that the External Audit Report be noted.

Resolved

That the External Audit Report be noted.

34. INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

The Audit Manager introduced the report to the Committee. Some aspects of the audit were not common, such as the Future High Street Fund. Strata had been Audited by Devon Audit Partnership. The Vice-Chair requested that the number of reports to Audit Scrutiny Committee be increased. In response, the Audit Manager suggested that there be a summary sheet that succinctly outlines the purpose of reports. This would cut down the length of future agendas. The Monitoring Officer assured the Committee that there was no need to sign NDAs when viewing confidential reports or information as part of their membership of the Committee.

Resolved

That the Internal Audit Annual Report 2022-2023 be noted.

35. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022-2023

The Audit Manager introduced the report to the Committee. The discussion centred around financial sustainability, cyber security, and member/officer roles and relationships. It was noted that in the future, a talk would be given by Strata to the committee on Cybersecurity.

It was proposed by Cllr Morgan and seconded by Cllr Thorne that it is recommended to Full Council that the Annual Governance Statement 2022-2023 be approved.

Resolved

That it be recommended to Full Council that the Annual Governance Statement 2022-2023 be approved.

36. 2022/23 DRAFT FINAL ACCOUNTS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The Chief Financial Officer introduced the report to the Committee. It was noted that he was still awaiting the completion of the 2021 external audit and reports. Changes in interest rates had affected the final accounts. Rising inflation and costs were discussed by the committee as they would have an effect on future borrowing. Councillors stated the need for increased income and the requirement to provide statutory services. The treasury team would continue to look at funding for future projects that required it.

It was proposed by Cllr Morgan and Cllr Thorne that the Audit Scrutiny Committee note the 3 actions in the report.

Resolved

That the Audit Scrutiny Committee note the following:

1. That the draft statement of accounts for 2022/23 have been published
2. The current authorised lending list at appendix 1
3. The draft treasury management results for 2022/23 at appendix 2

37. OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT

The Audit Manager introduced the report to the Committee. It included 3 highlighted cases.

Resolved

That the Ombudsman Annual Report be noted.

38. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AMENDMENT

The Audit Manager introduced the report to the committee. She noted that there were some amendments to the policy but that Protect had been complimentary to it.

It was proposed by Cllr Morgan and seconded by Cllr Thorne that the amended whistleblowing policy be approved.

Resolved

That the amended whistleblowing policy is approved.

39. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN AND CHARTER 2023-2024

The Audit Manager introduced the report to the committee. It was noted that it was a similar report to the previous year's. Several reviews had taken place in previous years such as a planning review before 2020 and the ignite review. It was suggested that the absence of a section on Planning should be explained.

It was proposed by Cllr Morgan and seconded by Cllr Sanders that the audit plan and charter be approved.

Resolved

That the Audit plan and charter be approved.

40. FINANCIAL INSTRUCTIONS WAIVERS

The Audit Manager introduced the report to the committee. The committee discussed the details of the clean oceans project in collaboration with Plymouth University. This included the need to acquire best value for money. The Committee noted that the Environmental Agency funds the project whilst Teignbridge Council administers it.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

In response to a question from a member regarding allowing the Audit Scrutiny Committee to agree the Council Tax Base instead of Full Council, the Audit Manager informed him that the Monitoring Officer would have to be consulted and it would be required as a change to the Constitution.

The meeting commenced at 11.00 am and finished at 12.45 pm.

Chair
Cllr Sally Morgan