

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of Audit Committee

Date: Wednesday, 29th April, 2020

Place: Virtual Meeting via MS Teams

- Present:** Councillor P Collins (Chair)
Councillors L Burton (Vice-Chair), B Ayling, T Cox, M Davidson,
N Folkard, S Habermel, M Kelly, I Shead and K Pandya
- In Attendance:** C Gamble, A Barnes, J Chesterton, E Allen, R Gill, S Dutton and C Wisdom (Deloitte).
- Start/End Time:** 6.30 - 8.22 pm

900 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair made an introductory speech, highlighting that this was the first public meeting of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to be held 'virtually' in accordance with the 2020 Regulations governing remote meetings.

901 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence at this meeting.

902 Declarations of Interest

The following Councillor declared interests as indicated:

Councillor Davidson – Minute 905 (Deloitte: Audit Plan to the Audit Committee, Audit for the year ending 31 March 2020) and Minute 906 (Counter Fraud and Investigation Directorate Quarterly Performance Report) – non-pecuniary interest: Non-Executive Director of South Essex Homes.

903 Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th January 2020

Resolved:-

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

904 Deloitte: Housing Benefit Subsidy Certification report for the year ending 31 March 2019

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the External Auditor's Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim assurance report for 2018/19.

The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the representative for Deloitte.

Resolved:

That the Grant Claim and Return Certification Report for 2018/19, be accepted.

905 Deloitte: Audit Plan to the Audit Committee, Audit for the year ending 31 March 2020

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the External Auditor's Audit planning report for 2019/20.

In response to questions on the funding implications associated with Covid-19, the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) advised that this would be addressed through the submission of separate reports to the Cabinet, including budget monitoring reports. The Head of Internal Audit added that the Audit Plan for 2020/21 would include an assessment of the use of resources in response to the Covid-19 situation.

On consideration of Appendix 3 to the report, the representative for Deloitte undertook to ensure that some specific guidance in relation to Covid-19 would be included in future External Auditor reports to the Committee.

The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the representative for Deloitte and Council officers.

Resolved:

That Deloitte's Audit planning report for 2019/20, be noted.

906 Counter Fraud and Investigation Directorate Quarterly Performance Report

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) setting out the progress made by the Counter Fraud & Investigation Team in delivering the Counter Fraud Strategy and Work Programme for 2019/20.

In response to comments on the allocation of resources to counter fraud investigations, the Acting Senior Investigations Officer undertook to provide additional information on the matter for inclusion in future reports to the Committee.

The Chair asked that an online training programme for Council officers and councillors to help highlight financial crime be investigated.

The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by officers.

Resolved:

That the performance of the Counter Fraud & Investigation Team, be noted.

907 Internal Audit Service Quarterly Performance Report

The Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director (Finance and Resources) setting out the progress made in delivering the Internal Audit Strategy for 2019/20.

The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by officers.

Resolved:

That the progress made in delivering the 2019/20 Internal Audit Strategy, be noted.

908 Internal Audit Charter, Strategy and Audit Plan for 2020/21

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the Internal Audit Charter with the supporting Strategy and Audit Plan for 2020/21.

On consideration of the report, the Head of Internal Audit undertook to ensure that the report to be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on the delivery of the Audit Plan would include information on the prioritisation of specific audit work.

The Committee were asked a number of questions which were responded to by officers.

Resolved:

That the Charter, Strategy and Audit Plan for 2020/21, be approved.

909 Audit Committee Assessment and Development Update

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) providing an update on the assessment and development plans in respect of the Audit Committee.

The Chairman highlighted the importance of the audit self-evaluation survey and encouraged members of the Committee (who had not yet participated in the survey) to complete the skills stocktake form as soon as possible.

Resolved:

That the Audit Committee members (who have yet to complete the skills stocktake form) complete the skills form and it be noted that the audit training date arranged for 23rd March will be rescheduled following the end of lockdown due to Covid-19.

910 Information Item

The Audit Committee received and noted the following information item:

- CIPFA Audit Committee Update 30 (February 2020): 'CIPFA Financial Management Code, responding to the Redmond Review: Results of CIPFA's Survey on Audit Committees and briefing on new guidance and resources.'

Chair: _____