

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Audit Committee

Date: Wednesday, 23rd October, 2024

Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

Present: Councillor R McMullan (Chair)
Councillors M O'Connor (Vice-Chair), Sam Allen, M Davidson,
S Habermel, J Norman and *J Moyies

(*Substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 30.)

In Attendance: Councillors A Jones and D Cowan
S Zeiss, A Barnes, R Harris, P Bates, S Dutton, C Fozzard,
S Newman, V Smith and C Thomas
N Ackroyd (KPMG), M Ramzan and I Buckus (Deloitte)

Start/End Time: 6.30 - 8.41 pm

10 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Courtenay (substitute: Cllr Moyies) and Terry (no substitute).

11 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at this meeting.

12 Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 17 July 2024

Update from Monitoring Officer

The Board received a verbal update from the Monitoring Officer on the formal response from the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) on the potential data breach reported to the ICO in November 2023. It was highlighted that the ICO has issued a reprimand and had recognised the remedial steps that the Council took immediately and has taken since to strengthen the Council's approach to information governance. This has included advice and support to relevant staff, further training and reviewing the FOI protocols to ensure personal data is secure. The ICO have also made one main recommendation related to further training which is already being progressed. Full details are available from the ICO website.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 17 July 2024, be confirmed as a correct record and signed.

13 Deloitte Verbal Update

The Committee received a verbal update on the work Deloitte have carried out for the 2023 year end and will be finalised by December 2024.

14 Deloitte: Auditors' Annual Report

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting the External Auditor's Annual Report for 2022/23.

The Committee asked questions which were responded to by officers and representatives from Deloitte.

Resolved:

That the Auditors' Annual Report for 2022/23, be approved.

15 Risk Management

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the refreshed Corporate Risk Management process.

The Committee asked questions which were responded to by officers.

Resolved:

That the refreshed Corporate Risk Management Policy Statement and Strategy, Risk Management Toolkit and updated Risk Register Template, as set out in the submitted report, be approved.

16 Annual Report - Comments, Complaints and Compliments - 2023/24

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Strategy and Change) presenting the comments, complaints and compliments annual report for 2023/24.

The Committee asked questions which were responded to by officers. The Committee also suggested that the compliments received should be highlighted on the Council's website.

Resolved:

1. That it be noted that the Council has the necessary structures in place to manage complaints received through the General and Children's and Adult Social Care statutory complaint process.

2. That it be noted that the Council has the necessary structures in place to manage comments, compliments and concerns received.

3. That the contents of the annual letter of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, be noted.

4. That the summary of complaints upheld by the Ombudsman following their investigation, be noted.

5. That the change to a two stage General complaints process from 1st September 2024 and the associated timescales for response, be noted.

6. That the preparations being made for full compliance by April 2026 with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, be noted.

17 CIPFA's Financial Management Code: Council Self Assessment Compliance Status Update

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting an update on the Council's continued compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management Code and progress against the action plan that resulted from the Council's previous self-assessment undertaken in March 2024.

Resolved:

1. That it be noted that the Council's latest mid-year self-assessment continues to demonstrate overall compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management Code.

2. That the progress against the Financial Management Code action plan that was reported to the Committee on 24 April 2024, be noted.

3. That it be noted that the next annual self-assessment of the Council's compliance status against CIPFA's Financial Management Code will be undertaken and reported to the Committee in April 2025.

18 Counter Fraud Quarterly Report

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting an update on the progress made by the Counter Fraud and Investigation Team (CFIT) in delivering the Counter Fraud Strategy and Work Programme for 2024/25.

Resolved:

That the performance of the Counter Fraud and Investigation Team over the last three months, as set out in the submitted report, be noted.

19 Internal Audit: Quarterly performance report

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting an update on the progress made in delivering the Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2024/25.

The Committee asked questions which were responded to by officers.

Resolved:

That the progress made in delivering the 2024/25 Internal Audit Strategy and Plan, as set out in the submitted report, be noted.

20 Revised Internal Audit Standards Update

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director (Finance and Resources) presenting an update on the revised Internal Audit professional standards.

Resolved:

That the update on the revised Internal Audit professional standards, as set out in the submitted report, be noted.

Chair: _____