

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

Present:-

Councillor Caulfield (Chair)

Councillors Brock

Councillors Staton

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

81 **DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' AND OFFICERS' INTERESTS
RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

No declarations of interest were received.

82 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nicholls and Tidd.

83 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 11th October 2023 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

84 **INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT - DECEMBER 2023**

The Head of the Internal Audit Consortium submitted a report for Members consideration. The report detailed progress against the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan and provided assurance on the governance, risk and control processes in place in respect of the audits completed.

It was noted that since this committee had last met 2 reports have been issued, 1 with Substantial assurance and 1 with Reasonable assurance.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

85 RIPA ANNUAL REPORT TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Head of Regulatory Law and Monitoring Officer (and RIPA Senior Responsible Officer) presented the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Annual Report 2022 and reminded Members of the outcome of the routine RIPA inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) in 2022 and set out priorities for the coming year.

The Council has powers to conduct authorised directed surveillances and use of human intelligence sources in certain circumstances in connection with the conduct of certain criminal investigations.

The IPC oversees the exercise of surveillance powers and the IPCO carried out a three year inspection on 9 June, 2022 with the council's RIPA Senior Responsible Officer and the Data Protection Officer. The inspector was complimentary of the council's RIPA Policy and considered it one of the best they had seen.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the proposed RIPA related activity for 2023/24 be progressed.

86 REPORT - LGO ANNUAL LETTER 2023

The Head of Regulatory Law and Monitoring Officer submitted a report informing Members of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter.

Each year, the Council receives an annual review letter from the Ombudsman summarising statistics about complaints received by the Ombudsman and their outcome. The latest annual letter, received in July

2023, related to the Council's performance in the year ending 31 March, 2023.

The Annual Letter, attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report, showed that 13 complaints had been made about the Council to the Ombudsman in the period 1 April, 2022 to 31 March, 2023. The complaints related to benefits and tax (2), environmental services and public protection and regulation (4), planning and development (3), housing (3) and Corporate and Other Services (1). Five complaints were referred back for local resolution, five were closed after initial enquiries, and one complaint was incomplete/invalid.

Of the two complaints investigated (both Housing related) neither were upheld by the Ombudsman in the year. One found no fault over how the Council had dealt with a rehousing application. The other found no worthwhile outcome achievable by further investigation.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

87 DELEGATION SCHEME AND CONSTITUTION - ACCEPTANCE OF GRANTS

The Head of Regulatory Law and Monitoring Officer presented recommendations for changes to the Constitution on the delegations relating to grants offered to the Council. These were shown at Appendix 1.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the report be approved with the changes to the Constitution and agreement of the delegations proposed at Appendix 1 agreed, with any consequential amendments to the Constitution to be made by the Monitoring Officer.
2. That appropriate guidance be developed by officers for grants applications and receipt of them by the Council and for monitoring.

88 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That under Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (Minute 89) and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (Minute 90).

89 MANAGEMENT OF UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLAINANTS - ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The Head of Regulatory Law and Monitoring Officer submitted a report on the use and application of the Council's Policy and Procedure on the Management of Unreasonable Complaints or Customers. The policy was reviewed annually by the Head of Regulatory Law Monitoring Officer and presented to the Standards and Audit Committee for approval.

The policy, attached at Appendix 1 of the officers' report, had been updated to ensure an effective Policy in the light of experience from its application.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Policy and Procedure on the Management of Unreasonable Complaints or Customers be updated as detailed in the Appendix of the officer's report.

90 I.T UPDATE (VERBAL REPORT)

The Head of Digital and Technology gave a verbal update to Members on the progress made against their recommendations from the Internal Audit Report relating to ICT, and how the team are working towards meeting all outstanding recommendations.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the verbal update be noted.

