

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 23rd November, 2022

Present:-

Councillor Caulfield (Chair)

Councillors Brady
Kellman

Councillors T Murphy

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

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

No declarations of interest were received.

26 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Christian, Rayner and Snowdon.

27 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 28 September, 2022 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

28 **REVISION OF THE CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES**

Pursuant to Cabinet Minute No. 48 (2022/23), the Transformation Programme Manager presented the revised Corporate Complaints policy and procedure which had been approved by Cabinet on 1 November, 2022. The policy aimed to modernise the Council's approach to complaints handling and embed a "learning from customers" culture which would underpin the delivery of excellent customer services across the Council.

The complaints procedure would be managed within the customer services function and the customer services team would be responsible for identifying trends and compiling reports to share with service managers and the corporate leadership team as well as the Standards and Audit Committee.

In response to Member's questions, the Transformation Programme Manager explained that the aim of the new procedure was to improve the management of complaints in a way that the data could be analysed. Members requested a report on the data gathered over the first quarter to understand how the new system was working.

Members could submit complaints on behalf of residents either through the My Chesterfield system, via phone to the customer contact centre or via email to a dedicated inbox. The Transformation Programme Manager had offered to attend all political group meetings to deliver a support session on the new policy and procedure.

Members expressed concerns that the report had not been considered by the Standards and Audit Committee prior to Cabinet.

***RESOLVED –**

That the following decisions approved by Cabinet on 1 November, 2022 be noted:

1. That the revised two stage complaints procedure, as set out in Appendix 1 of the officer's report be approved for implementation.
2. That the co-ordination and oversight of corporate complaints be integrated into the Customer Services function and that Customer Services Advisers take on responsibility for the 'complaint officer' role as set out in the revised complaints procedure.

29 AUDIT REPORT ON THE 2021/22 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Service Director – Finance submitted a report on the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22, the Audit Completion Report from Mazars, the Council's external auditors, and the Letter of Representation.

The Statement of Accounts, attached at Appendix A of the officer's report, included the Annual Governance Statement, the Movement in Reserves

Statement, the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement, the Housing Revenue Account Income and Expenditure Statement, and the Collection Fund. The Service Director – Finance explained that the external auditors had requested some changes to the final Statement of Accounts and sought delegated authority to agree any final changes to the Council’s Statement of Accounts for 2021/22.

The external auditors were required to “communicate audit matters to those charged with governance”, i.e. the Standards and Audit Committee, and a copy of the external auditor’s report was attached at Appendix 2 of the officer’s report. Michael Norman of Mazars attended the meeting to present the external auditor’s report.

The external auditors were required to obtain written representations from management in respect of fraud, compliance with laws and regulations, contingent liabilities, related party disclosures and post balance sheet events in the form of a Letter of Representation. The letter was attached at Appendix 3 of the officer’s report.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22, attached at Appendix A of the officer’s report, be approved.
2. That the Audit Completion Report, attached at Appendix B of the officer’s report, be received.
3. That delegated authority be granted to the Service Director – Finance in consultation with the Chair of the Standards and Audit Committee to make any changes which may be necessary to ensure the completion of the Statement of Accounts by 20 November, 2022, as agreed with the Council’s External Auditor.
4. That delegated authority be granted to the Service Director – Finance in consultation with the Chair of the Standards and Audit Committee to approve the Letter of Representation, attached at Appendix C of the officer’s report, following the conclusion of the audit and the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22.

The Head of the Internal Audit Consortium submitted a report to provide Members with a progress update on the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan.

Since the Committee last met in September, four reports had been issued with the following levels of assurance:

- ‘Substantial assurance’ – one
- ‘Reasonable assurance’ – three

A summary of the reports issued was attached at Appendix 1 of the officer’s report.

***RESOLVED –**

That the update be noted.

31 STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

The work programme for the Standards and Audit Committee for 2022/23 was considered.

***RESOLVED –**

That the work programme be noted.

32 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 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Councillor Brady left the meeting at this point and did not return.

33 REVIEW OF THE UNREASONABLE COMPLAINTS POLICY

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 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 take into account new advice from the Ombudsman.

***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 Appendix A of the officer's report.