

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**Wednesday, 12th July, 2023**

Present:-

Councillor Caulfield (Chair)

Councillors Jacobs
Brock
StatonCouncillors Blakemore
Thornton
Nicholls

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

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

No declarations of interest were received.

51 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E Tidd.

52 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 26 April 2023 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

53 DELEGATION SCHEME AND CONSTITUTION

The Monitoring Officer presented recommendations for changes to the Constitution and the delegations proposed for agreement were shown at Appendix 1.

The changes needed at Appendix 1 included the Execution of Electronic Documents, the Human Resources related functions and Contract Procedure Rules.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be approved with the changes to the Constitution and agreement of the delegations proposed at Appendix 1.

54 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE

The Head of the Internal Audit Consortium submitted a report for Members consideration. The report detailed progress against the 2022/23 and 2023/24 Internal Audit Plans and provided assurance on the governance, risk and control processes in place in respect of the audits completed.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

55 INTERNAL AUDIT CONSORTIUM ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Head of the Internal Audit Consortium submitted a report detailing a summary of the internal audit work undertaken during 2022/23.

The report noted how 75% of the plan has been completed with plans in place for the completion of the remaining areas as part of the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan.

The report assessed that reasonable assurance can be provided on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework for governance, risk management and control for the year ended 2022/23. Assurance can never be absolute. In the context "reasonable assurance" means that arrangements are in place to manage key risks and to meet good governance principles, but there are some areas where improvements are required.

No fraud was identified.

It was noted that, the quality control procedures in place for the Internal Audit Consortium are documented in the Quality and Assurance Improvement Programme at Appendix 3.

Confirmation was gained that the internal audit activity is organisationally independent. Internal audit reports directly to the Service Manager –

Finance but had direct and unrestricted access to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Standards and Audit Committee.

It was noted that based on the information provided in the report on the completion of the 2022/23 internal audit plan, it was considered that the requirements of the Internal Audit Charter were met during the year.

Explanations were given around the reasons for the areas that were rated as Limited Assurance in the 2022/23 financial year. Assurance was given that the areas in question, housing rents, procurement and cyber risk and network security, had plans in place to introduce the recommendations made and would be reviewed again in this financial year. Members asked if the Head of Procurement would be able to attend the next meeting in order to provide a verbal update.

Members asked questions about the internal audit customer satisfaction survey. It was requested that a copy of the customer satisfaction survey be circulated after the meeting. The low return rates were also questioned. Members asked if a line could be added when sending out the questionnaire saying that the Audit Committee would like to see more responses and that this would be closely monitored.

Members asked if there was an internal audit plan. The Head of the Internal Audit Consortium confirmed that there was and that this would be brought to the next meeting as an appendix to the progress report. The plan had been approved at the previous meeting in April.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be accepted.

56 STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Head of the Internal Audit Consortium presented the Annual Report of the Standards and Audit Committee 2022/23, which sets out the work of the Standards and Audit Committee for 2022/23 in line with best practice.

A summary of the work of the Standards and Audit Committee for the financial year 2022/23 was shown at paragraph 3.

The work of the Standards and Audit Committee helps to ensure that processes and controls are operating effectively, thereby contributing to ensuring that value for money is obtained.

***RESOLVED –**

The Standards and Audit Committee considered the Standards and Audit Committee Annual Report and referred it to Council for approval.

57 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.

58 REVIEW OF COUNCILLOR COMPLAINTS 2022

The Monitoring Officer submitted the Annual Report – Standards of Conduct, giving members an overview of complaints about councillors and the standards system for the two years since the previous annual report in February 2022.

It was noted that local authorities have a duty under the Localism Act 2011 to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members. At Chesterfield Borough Council this responsibility is placed with the Standards and Audit Committee. The Council adopted a new Code of Conduct in June 2012 as required by the Localism Act 2011. Since the adoption of the 2012 Code there have been various complaints about councillors. Each complaint is initially assessed in accordance with the Council's complaints assessment process by the Monitoring Officer (or their nominated deputy) and a range of outcomes are possible.

In 2022 there was only one complaint that was formally assessed but this was not sufficiently serious to warrant an investigation. There were therefore too few formal complaints to identify themes. The Monitoring Officer did report that there was a growing trend in complaints about comments made by councillors on social media and he would look specifically at those types of complaints.

It was noted that The Local Government Association produced a new model code at the end of 2020, taking into account The Committee on Standards in Public Life report of 2019. Members have previously been informed about the new model code. The Monitoring Officer intends to present a further report on the Local Government Association Model Code and whether the Council should adopt it, at a meeting later in the year.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.