

STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**Wednesday, 16th February, 2022**

Present:-

Councillor Caulfield (Chair)

Councillors Rayner
Brady
KellmanCouncillors T Murphy
Snowdon

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

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

No declarations of interest were received.

31 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Cawthorne.

32 MINUTES**RESOLVED –**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 24 November, 2021 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

33 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND STRATEGY RISK REGISTER

The Service Director – Corporate presented a report on risk management activities during 2021/22 and introduced the revised Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register for 2022/23 for consideration.

Following the Corporate Leadership Team restructure, the responsibility for Corporate Risk Management had transitioned into the Corporate Directorate and a number of changes had taken place which were detailed in paragraph 4.1 of the officer's report.

The Risk Management Strategy 2022/23, attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report, would establish a framework for the effective and systematic management of risk, ensuring that risk management was embedded throughout the council. The strategy sought to ensure consistency across the council when managing risks and clearly defined the roles and responsibilities including the Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG) who develop and implement the Risk Management Strategy and are accountable to the Corporate Leadership Team.

The CRMG had reviewed the Council's Strategic Risk Register utilising a variety of information, data and techniques. Both the Risk Register and the Risk Register Summary were attached at Appendix 2 and 3 of the officer's report and would be live documents, reviewed quarterly by the CRMG. A monitoring report would be submitted to this Committee twice each year.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the progress made on developing the Council's approach to risk management during 2021/22 be noted.
2. That the Risk Management Strategy 2022/23 and Strategic Risk Register base document for 2022/23 be recommended to Full Council for approval.

34 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021-22 (INCLUDING INVESTMENT AND CAPITAL STRATEGY)

The Group Financial Accountant presented the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2022/23, the Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy reports for 2022/23 and the Minimum Reserve Provision (MRP) Policy for 2022/23, attached at Appendices A to D of the officer's report.

The report noted the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services and statutory government guidance which placed duties on the council with regard to the council's Treasury Management and Investment Strategies.

***RESOLVED –**

That it be recommended to Full Council that:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2022/23, attached at Appendix A of the officer's report, be approved.
2. The Capital Strategy Report 2022/23, including the Prudential Code Indicators, attached at Appendix B of the officer's report, be approved.
3. The Investment Strategy Report 2022/23, attached at Appendix C of the officer's report, be approved.
4. The Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2022/23, attached at Appendix D of the officer's report, be approved.

35 PROCUREMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

The Service Director – Finance presented a report on the method of procurement for the external audit service to cover the five consecutive financial years from 1 April, 2023.

The report explained that local bodies could either arrange their own procurement and make the appointment themselves or use the national collective scheme managed by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd. The advantages and disadvantages of both options were outlined in section 4.2 of the officer's report.

Due to the current challenging marketing conditions and availability of appropriately qualified auditors, it was recommended that option two, the national scheme, was the preferred method of procurement on the basis that it was the most efficient way to appoint the external auditor and was likely to achieve the most competitive price.

***RESOLVED –**

That it be recommended to Full Council that the Council opts into the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd for the procurement and appointment of external auditors.

36 EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Council's external auditors, Mazars, presented a report updating members on the progress in delivering their responsibilities as external auditors.

The report informed members of the progress in delivering the 2020/21 audit and assurance work and the 2021/22 audit planning process.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

37 AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM

The Council's external auditors, Mazars, presented the draft Audit Strategy Memorandum for the year ending 31 March, 2022. The memorandum summarised the audit approach taken by Mazars and highlighted significant audit risks and areas of key judgements.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

38 OUTSTANDING INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Internal Audit Consortium Manager submitted a report summarising the internal audit recommendations that were made, implemented or outstanding. Details of the recommendations along with an update from managers in respect of each outstanding recommendation was attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report.

Members were advised that the next audit of Procurement would be in the 2022/23 internal audit plan and that it was proposed to bring an update to the Committee following the audit.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a further summary of outstanding internal audit recommendations be submitted to the Standards and Audit Committee in September 2022.

3. That an update on Procurement be submitted to the Standards and Audit Committee following the audit as part of the 2022/23 internal audit plan.

39 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 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

40 PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE 2021/22 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

The Internal Audit Consortium Manager presented a report summarising the internal audit reports issued during the period October 2021 to January 2022 in relation to the 2021/22 internal audit plan.

It was noted that four reports had been issued during this period which had been given the following levels of assurance:

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

A summary of these reports was provided in Appendix 1 of the officer's report and the limited assurance report (Queen's Park Sports Centre Income) was attached in full at Appendix 3 of the officer's report. The Committee were informed that no fraud had been detected. The Committee requested that the manager of the Queen's Park Sports Centre attend the next meeting.

Members were also informed on the progress against the internal audit plan which was detailed in Appendix 2 of the officer's report.

***RESOLVED –**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That an officer be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee to provide an update on the implementation of

recommendations from the audit of Queens Park Sports Centre Income.

41 ANNUAL REPORT - STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The Monitoring Officer presented a report providing members with an overview of the complaints procedure and duties placed on the Council with regard to the conduct of its members along with a summary of the complaints received during 2020 and 2021.

In 2020 there had been 24 complaints and in 2021 there had been 9 complaints. However, 17 of those received in 2020 and 2 of those received in 2021 were either withdrawn, discontinued/not active, not clarified or otherwise considered trivial not warranting assessment, therefore 7 complaints had proceeded to assessment in each year. The outcomes meant that there had been no investigations and no hearings in both years.

The report also informed members of the relevant training and developments during 2020/21 which included the report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) which the Committee considered in 2019. Changes had been made to the Council's procedures following the best practice recommendations in the report, however the government's response to the CSPL report was still due to be published. The report also referred to the LGA Model Code of Conduct, intended to be considered further by the Committee at a future meeting.

The Monitoring Officer provided an overview of the role of the independent person in the complaints process and noted that their input into the assessment of complaints had been valuable in assessment determination.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

42 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - RE-ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC

***RESOLVED –**

That the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

**43 EXTERNAL REVIEW OF INTERNAL AUDIT - ACTION PLAN
PROGRESS**

The Internal Audit Consortium Manager presented a report providing a progress update regarding the implementation of recommendations arising from the external review of internal audit.

Public Sector Internal Audit Standards require that an external assessment be carried out at least once every five years by a qualified independent assessor, this had taken place in May 2021 and the results were reported to this Committee. The recommendations made by the external reviewer were attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report along with proposed actions and an update on the progress achieved so far.

***RESOLVED –**

That the report be noted.

**44 STANDARDS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME
2021/22**

The work programme for the Standards and Audit Committee for 2021/22 was considered.

RESOLVED –

That the work programme be noted.