
AUDIT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 JULY 2024

Present: Councillors M Bunday, Evemy and Leggett (Chair)

Apologies: Councillors Chapman and Powell-Vaughan

1. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED: that Councillor Chapman be appointed as Vice-Chair for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2024/25.

2. **DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023-24**

The Committee received and noted the report of the Executive Director of Enabling Services detailing the Draft Annual Governance Statement 2023/24. The Accounts and Audit Regulations required the Council to develop and publish an Annual Governance Statement ('AGS'). The purpose of the AGS, which was published with the Statement of Accounts ('SoA'), was to provide an accurate representation of the corporate governance arrangements in place during the year and to identify any areas where there were significant gaps or where improvements were required.

The Committee particularly noted the status of the agreed actions from the draft 2022/23 AGS as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report and the draft AGS 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report. It was noted that the AGS would also be presented to Governance Committee in due course as part of the Committee's remit.

3. **DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2023/24**

The Committee considered the report of the Executive Director of Enabling Services detailing the Draft Statement of Accounts 2023/24 which had been signed by the Executive Director of Enabling Services and S151 Officer on 28th May 2024 in line with the statutory requirement for the unaudited accounts to be published by 31st May 2024.

The Committee noted that there would be a detailed training session for Members of the Committee on the accounts before them returning to Committee in September for final sign off. It was noted that there had been an objection to the accounts received relating to lack of progress with Direct Payments which the External Auditors were mindful to accept pending further information being sought by 23rd August when a final opinion on the objection would be made.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the draft statement of accounts 2023/24 had been signed by the S151 Officer be noted; and
- (ii) that the audited statement of accounts 2023/24 was expected to be presented to Committee on 30 September 2024 for approval be noted.

4. **REVIEW OF PRUDENTIAL LIMITS AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2023/24**

The Committee received and noted the report of the Executive Director of Enabling Services detailing the Review of Prudential Limits and Treasury Management Outturn 2023/24. The report informed the Committee of the treasury management performance for 2023/24 against the approved Prudential Indicators for external Debt and Treasury Management. The Committee also noted the continued proactive approach to Treasury Management had led to reductions in borrowing costs and safeguarded investment income during the year.

The Committee noted that there would be a further report in Quarter 2 of the year reviewing Prudential Indicators following the authority receiving the Exceptional Financial Support.

5. **ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION 2023-24**

The Committee received and noted the report of the Chief Financial Auditor detailing the Annual Internal Audit Opinion 2023/24. The report also provided an update on the internal audit work carried out since the last reporting period. The Committee also noted the introduction of an audit tracker which would also be submitted to future meetings of the Committee to support progress reports.

The Committee particularly noted the following points:

- Page 98 – Appointeeship – follow up work had moved the assurance to limited however further improvements were still needed.
- Page 99 – Childcare Payments – a potential issue had been highlighted regarding controls not being enacted, which saw work commence quickly taking the audit from no assurance to limited assurance.
- Page 108 – there had been two investigations, one of which wasn't a control failing an external company had dissolved causing the issues, the second investigation had identified a number of lessons to be learned which would be shared in due course.