

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 15 September 2020

Present: Councillor Barrington-King (Chairman)
Councillors Reilly (Vice-Chairman), Backhouse, Everitt, Ms Palmer, Rands and Warne.
Parish/Town Councillors: Mr Mackonochie and Mr Edwards
Independent Members: Mr Quigley and Mr Turner

Officers in Attendance: Stephen Baughen (Head of Planning Services), Rich Clarke (Head of Audit Partnership), Lee Colyer (Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)), Sarah Ironmonger, Ade Oyerinde, Keith Trowell (Team Leader (Corporate Governance)), Jen Warrillow (Internal Audit Manager) and Emer Moran (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: None

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

AG14/20 The Chairman opened the meeting, introduced Committee members and officers in attendance, and outlined procedural matters of the meeting.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

AG15/20 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bland.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

AG16/20 No declarations of interest were received.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK (IN ACCORDANCE WITH COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 18):

AG17/20 No notifications of any visiting members wishing to speak had been received.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE DATED 21 JULY 2020

AG18/20 The minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee dated 21 July 2020 were submitted.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee dated 21 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

AG19/20 Mr Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development introduced the report and introduced the Risk Owner Stephen Baughen, Head of Planning.

Mr Baughen gave a detailed update on Risk Scenario 8: Local Plan Adoption – Housing; which set out the strategic risks identified by the Council and currently being managed and tracked by senior management. The report provided a current update on the evaluated threat level and controls in place for each risk issue.

Members of the Committee took account of the report and raised a number of questions and issues within their discussions. Points raised included:

- It was advised that all key stages of the Local Plan, which was now in its third element had been brought to Members through the non decision making Planning Policy Working Group to which all Members were invited, and attendance from Members had been high. Papers were distributed to all Members from all parties so they were aware of various options and approaches to different elements of the plan, and had endorsed the plan at each stage as it was brought forward. Furthermore, all the main political parties have set out commitments to boost housing. Therefore, if there was a significant political change after the election, given such broad political involvement in the production of the Draft Local Plan and Pre Submission stage, the risk of new Members not taking the Local Plan forward was reduced.
- It was confirmed that at this stage there had not been any expressed discussion with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) or other departments of Government related to the forthcoming White Paper and the role of Planning.
- The challenge faced by the council was acknowledged should the need to plan for an additional 32% of housing over the plan period and the impact that could have on other areas such as London.

RESOLVED:

1. That the risk management report and arrangements for managing strategic risk be noted.

UPDATED INTERNAL AUDIT & ASSURANCE PLAN 2020/21

AG20/20 Mr Rich Clarke, Head of Audit Partnership presented his report which provided an update to the Internal Audit & Assurance Plan for 2020/21 following significant changes to the Council's risks and priorities during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Members and Officers were thanked for their support throughout the plan and Members were assured that it had been prepared by Mr Clarke and his team with independent objectivity and free from any undue influence.

Members of the Committee took account of the report and raised a number of questions and issues within their discussions. These included:

- Given that Internal Audit used a cloud based electronic audit management software and their files and work was already online, it was advised that as a service they were relatively prepared for the remote working which other departments have had to take up as a result of the pandemic. Mr Clarke advised that he had full confidence in the level of assurance they could offer all 4 authorities that they covered.
- An explanation was provided related to the process that goes into the risk assessment carried out to ultimately decided what went on to the plan and the priority it was given, such as large significant services that had undergone substantial changes a recent example being the waste contract.
- The removal of the Leisure Contract Management from the plan was discussed and an explanation of what would have been

audited was provided had it remained. The need for flexibility and agility of the plan was highlighted given that the Leisure Centres were now reopened

RESOLVED:

1. That the update to the 2020/21 Internal Audit & Assurance Plan be approved.
2. That the approach for keeping the plan current through the year be noted.
3. That the Head of Audit Partnership's conclusion that he has updated the plan with independence and objectivity, free from undue influence be noted.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS 2019/20

AG21/20 Ms Jane Clarke, Head of Policy & Governance presented her report which provided a review of the complaints received by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure, together with the decisions made by the Local Government Ombudsman in relation to those progressed to the Ombudsman.

There were no matters of significance discussed following the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the annual complaint statistics and issues raised during 2019-20, and lessons learned as a result of this feedback be noted; and
2. That the Annual Review letter published by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman at appendix A be noted.

CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES

AG22/20 Mr Keith Trowell, Corporate Governance Team Leader presented his report which set out and recommended several amendments to the Constitution following consultation with the Constitution Review Working Party and Management Board.

There were no matters of significance discussed following the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the amendments to Part 3 the Constitution shown as track changes in Appendix A, be approved and adopted; and
2. That the additional Table shown in Appendix B to be added to Part 3 of the Constitution be approved and adopted.

UPDATE ON COMPLAINTS RECEIVED UNDER THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

AG23/20 Mr Keith Trowell, Corporate Governance Team Leader presented his report which This report provides an update on complaints received under the

Members' Code of Conduct in the period 9 July 2020 to 1 September 2020.

No matters of significance were discussed following the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the update on complaints received under the Members' Code of Conduct be noted.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME AS AT 7 SEPTEMBER 2020

AG24/20 The Committee's work programme was presented for members' information.

RESOLVED – That the Work Programme as at 7 September 2020 be noted.

URGENT BUSINESS

AG25/20 There was no urgent business for consideration.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING 24 NOVEMBER 2020

AG26/20 The next meeting was scheduled for 24 November 2020 at 6.30pm

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 7.57 pm.