

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, TN1 1RS, at 6.30 pm on Tuesday, 19 September 2023

Present: Councillor Mark Munday (Chair)
Councillors McMillan (Vice-Chair), Allen, Barrass, Francis, Sankey and White.
Parish Representatives: Councillor Edwards and Mackonochie.
Independent Members: Mr Elliott.

Officers in Attendance: Joanne E Brown (Audit Partner), Lee Colyer (Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)), Jane Fineman (Head of Finance and Procurement), Carlos Hone (Head of Planning), Lucy Nutley (Public Sector Audit Senior Manager, Grant Thornton), Claudette Valmond (Head of Legal Partnership and Interim Monitoring Officer), Katherine Woodward (Head of Mid Kent Audit) and Emer Moran (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance: None

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

AG119/23 The Chair opened the meeting, introduced Committee members and officers in attendance, and outlined procedural matters of the meeting.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

AG120/23 Apologies for absence were received from Independent Member Geoff Turner.

Councillor Lidstone was not present.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

AG121/23 No declarations of interest were received.

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

AG122/23 No notifications of any visiting members wishing to speak had been received.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE DATED 25 JULY 2023

AG123/23 It was highlighted that the wording captured under risk 7 should read: "To put to Overview and Scrutiny the structure and the conformity of the questionnaires that the Borough issues".

It was noted that the Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk had not been made aware of the contents of the minutes.

It was agreed that the comments had been noted and the minutes of the Audit & Governance meetings for 25 July and 19 September would be sent to the Chair, Vice Chair and the Clerk of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED – That subject to the amendments noted above, that the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee dated 25 July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME AS AT 22 AUGUST 2023

AG124/23 The Committee's work programme was presented for members' information.

RESOLVED – That the Future Work Programme as at 22 August 2023 which included upcoming training, be noted.

AUDIT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

AG125/23 Katherine Woodward, Head of Mid Kent Audit presented the report as per the agenda.

Member questions and Officer clarification included:

- i. The report was taken as read.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report for 2022/23 (appendix A), be agreed.
2. That the Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee presents the report to a future meeting of the Full Council to demonstrate how the Committee has discharged its duties.

CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

AG126/23 Claudette Valmond, Head of Legal Partnership presented the report as per the agenda.

Member questions and Officer clarification included:

- i. The report was taken as read.

RESOLVED:

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

STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER REVIEW SEPTEMBER 2023

AG127/23 Carlos Hone, Head of Planning presented the report as per the agenda.

Member questions and Officer clarification included:

- i. It was advised that the list of potential impacts and consequences were not in priority order and it was possible to raise items in the list for future versions.
- ii. It was stated that there was already a local development plan in place, albeit a bit old, therefore there was a delay between the existing Local Plan and the adoption of the emerging Local Plan which set out through a number of its allocations and set policies how the Council aimed to deliver on affordable housing and the policies were there to help to meet the need of insufficient housing for young people.

- iii. It was agreed that the presentation of the Strategic Risk Profile shown on page 40 of the report would remain consistent for all future reports.
- iv. With regard to affordable housing, the Local Plan was subject to rigorous assessment and supported with evidence in particular with regards to viability, so the affordable housing figures were set so that they can be delivered, this showed the importance of getting the local plan in place.
- v. Planning applications if they came forward affected by market conditions, needed to be considered on the merits of the case with regard to viability. The policies were there to set the direction of travel and ensured there was an overall concept of how much affordable housing should come forward.

RESOLVED:

1. That the notes the strategic risk register and the arrangements for managing strategic risk, be agreed.

DRAFT FINANCIAL REPORT AND AUDIT FINDINGS 2022-23

AG128/23 Jane Fineman, Head of Finance and Procurement presented the report as per the agenda.

Joanne Brown, Grant Thornton presented the Final Draft Audit Findings report as per the agenda.

Member Questions and Officer clarification included:

- i. An explanation on Tunbridge Wells Property Holdings Ltd, how it was audited and what assets were held was provided for Members.

RESOLVED:

1. That Grant Thornton's Audit Findings Report – Appendix B, be noted.
2. That the draft Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement – Appendix A, be approved.
3. That the Chairman and the Director of Finance, Policy & Development to sign a Letter of Representation based on Appendix A and the Audit Findings Report, be authorised.

URGENT BUSINESS

AG129/23 There was no urgent business for consideration.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING TUESDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2023

AG130/23 The next meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee was scheduled for Tuesday 28 November 2023.

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 7.07 pm.

