

Audit and Governance Committee

Tuesday 16 January 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor Finn, in the Chair.

Councillor Stevens, Vice Chair.

Councillors Dr Mahony, Raynsford, Stevens and Tuffin and Independent Member Mrs Benny.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Allen.

Also in attendance: Louise Clapton (Senior Auditor (via Teams)), Alison Critchfield (Senior Lawyer), Carolyn Haynes (Interim Head of Finance), Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk), Barrie Morris (External Auditor, Grant Thornton (via Teams)), Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive) and Hannah Whiting (Democratic Advisor).

The meeting started at 12.30 pm and finished at 1.45 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

46. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

47. **Minutes**

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023 as a correct record.

48. **Chair's Urgent Business**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

49. **Constitutional Review Update**

Councillor Stevens, supported by Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk) introduced the item and discussed the following:

- a) Petition scheme;
- b) Standards Committee;
- c) Terms of reference for Committees;
- d) Motions submitted at City Council meetings;

- e) Length of City Council meetings;
- f) The following further amendments were being proposed:
 - a. “2.4 - Clarify that there is an expectation that notice of amendments should be one clear working day to enable efficient management of business at Council;
 - b. 9.1 – Add “Move to suspend standing orders” to the list of motions which can be moved without notice (should not have been removed)”;

During questions, the following was discussed:

- g) Length of debate at City Council meetings;
- h) Amendments to motions at City Council meetings;
- i) What would be looked at next;
- j) Petition scheme access;
- k) Quorum for the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Committee agreed to:

1. Recommend the Amended Part E and Petition Scheme/Guidance;
2. Recommend the New Rule of Debate and Standards Committee terms of reference;
3. Adjust the quorum for Audit and Governance Committee to four members;
4. Bring back Planning / Corporate Parenting to the March meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee (and any other amendments deemed necessary);
5. Recommend that Audit and Governance Committee worked within its remit and approved any amendments to standing orders in March and maintained oversight, particularly in relation to the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

50. **2019/20 Audit Update** (Verbal Report)

Carolyn Haynes (Interim Head of Finance) provided an update to the Committee on the 2019/20 Audit Update and negotiations with DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities), supported by Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive).

During discussions, the following was highlighted:

- a) The aim was to resolve the audit for 2019/20 ahead of setting the budget for 2024/25;
- b) Reasons for the deadline to resolve the issue;
- c) Request that when the decision was made, all members of the Committee were updated.

51. **External Audit - Update** (Verbal Report)

Barrie Morris (External Auditor, Grant Thornton) provided an update on outstanding audits and highlighted the following:

- a) Backstop date;
- b) Explained how Audits would be caught up to date.

52. **Electoral Cycle Consultation Arrangements** (To Follow)

Giles Perritt (Assistant Chief Executive) introduced the report and highlighted:

- a) Reason the item had come to Committee;
- b) Difficulties in engagement with consultation and reason for proposed timings;
- c) Ward membership.

During questions, the following was discussed:

- d) Two member wards;
- e) Timescale of consultation;
- f) Cost of different frequencies of elections;
- g) Councillor engagement with the public.

That Audit and Governance Committee recommended to City Council:

1. That a consultation exercise on the Council's electoral cycle was undertaken to run concurrently with Local Government Boundary Commission for England proposals for revised ward names, numbers and boundaries between July and September 2024;
2. Confirmed the consultation questions agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee of 20 March 2023.

For (4)

Councillors Raynsford, Stevens, Tuffin and Independent Member Mrs Benny.

Abstain (1)

Councillor Finn.

Against (1)

Councillor Dr Mahony.

53. **Work Programme**

The Committee agreed to note its work programme.

54. **Tracking Decisions**

Ross Jago (Head of Governance, Performance and Risk) informed the Committee that:

- a) Following the meeting, the first would be completed;
- b) There had been some issues but a webpage for a risk dashboard was in progress.

The Committee agreed to note its tracking decisions document.