

## Minutes of a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on Thursday, 22 April 2021 - Remote Meeting

Commenced 10.00 am  
Concluded 11.40 am

### Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE
Tait Thornton Watson	Pollard

Observers: Councillor Johnson

### Councillor Tait in the Chair

#### 42. CHAIRS OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed the previous Chair of the Committee Councillor Johnson to the meeting. She reported that Councillor Johnson would not be standing as a Councillor in the Elections this time and thanked him for the valuable work he had undertaken on the Committee and his services as a Councillor and wished him all the best for the future.

#### 43. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

#### 44. MINUTES

Resolved –

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2021 be signed as a correct record.**

#### 45. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

There were no appeals submitted by the public to review decisions to restrict documents.

#### 46. FORMALISATION OF WELLBEING BOARD GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Prior to the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, a process was underway to reform the Health and Wellbeing Board, to become the Wellbeing Board, including associated changes to its membership, and focus.

The Strategic Director, Health and Wellbeing submitted **Document “AM”** which sought approval for the formalisation of the Wellbeing Board governance arrangements.

##### **Resolved-**

**That the changes to the name, membership and role and functions of the Board as detailed in Document “AM” be noted and that the report be recommended to Council for approval.**

**Action: Strategic Director, Health and Wellbeing/City Solicitor**

#### 47. EXTERNAL AUDIT - AUDIT STRATEGY MEMORANDUM 2020-2021

The External Auditor submitted **Document “AH”** which set out the plan for the external audit of the Council for the financial year 2020-2021. The document:

- described External Audit’s approach to the audit of the Council’s financial statements;
- included External Audit’s assessment of the significant risks of material misstatement in the financial statements; and outlined the proposed testing strategy to address the identified risks.

The Audit Strategy Memorandum also sets out External Audit’s approach to the Value for Money work, sufficient to enable External Audit to form a conclusion as to whether the Council had made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

In response to a Member’s query relating to fraudulent covid 19 business grant claims, the Director of Finance and IT reported that checks were in place to ensure that the business grants being applied for were legitimate and that applications were appropriately scrutinised.

##### **Resolved –**

**That the Audit Strategy Memorandum 2020-2021 (Document “AH”) was considered and approved.**

#### **48. EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The External Auditor submitted **Document “AI”** which provided the Committee with an update on progress in delivering their External Audit responsibilities in 2020/21. The report also provided an update on non-audit assurance work completed in 2019/20 and summarised key national publications that might be of interest to Members.

Members were informed that the necessary documents had now been received and the 2019/20 audit certificate would be issued shortly and that the 2019/20 Housing Benefit work was now close to completion. It was reported that work had already started on the 2020/21 Accounts Audit.

**Resolved –**

**That the report (Document “AI”) was considered and noted.**

#### **49. COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITY REPORT 2020-2021**

The Director of Finance and IT submitted **Document “AJ”** which reported on the Council wide complaints performance and activity outcomes for the financial year ending 31 March 2021.

Members commented on a number of issues on the contents of the report which included the mechanism of recording complaints on two systems (RESPOND and CIVICA); the need for all complaints to be captured; and training of staff to ensure they understood the difference between a complaint and a query - a policy was needed that made it clear.

It was reported that a comprehensive plan had been developed to ensure improvements were made in this area, which included having a corporate platform for recording all complaints; reviewing the complaint handling model, setting performance indicators, and introducing specialist advice and training. It was reported recommendations for improvement were highlighted at paragraph 3.2 of the report.

The Director of Finance and IT reported that regular progress reports were being considered at Corporate Management Team to ensure progress was being made effectively.

**Resolved-**

**That the Committee noted the performance information contained within the report (Document “AJ”) and supports the ongoing improvement actions and that a progress report be submitted to the Committee in six months’ time.**

**Action: Director of Finance and IT**

**50. INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2021/22**

The Director of Finance and IT submitted **Document “AK”** which outlined the Internal Audit Plan for the financial year 2021/2022. The delivery of the audit plan would assist with risks within the systems reviewed being managed to an acceptable level through improvement in internal control.

Members sought clarification on the purchase of IT systems and utilisation of licences.

It was reported that one of the changes in the Contract Standing Orders was that any IT procured needed to be referred to the IT department.

Members were informed that Computer Audit Services were provided by Salford Council.

**Resolved–**

**That the Committee reviewed and approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2021/2022 (Document “AK”).**

**Action: Director of Finance and IT**

**51. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION - CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources submitted **Document “AL”** which provided details of the annual review of the Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders sections of the Council’s Constitution and made recommendations for their amendment.

Members made the following comments:

- Why the definition Best Value for Money was now only Best Value?
- EU Thresholds was now Thresholds – would monetary definition remain linked to EU currency equivalent.
- Contracts of £2m and above should be reported to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee – submitting reports to the relevant Committee for consideration in a timely manner was welcomed.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees could be provided with guidance as to

the capacity in which such contracts were being considered as Scrutiny Committees did not have decision making powers in relation to them.

In response to Members' questions it was reported that the removal of "for money" was on the advice of Legal Services to bring it in line with the Best Value duty; government legislation would give further clarity in 2022 in relation to thresholds for procurement; contracts of £2m and above should be submitted to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a timely manner.

It was suggested that it would be more appropriate if the consideration of contracts of £2m was undertaken by Executive who had decision making powers and would be subject to call-in.

Members of the Committee felt it was important that Overview and Scrutiny Committees continue to be informed of contracts of £2m and above.

It was reported that it might not serve any useful purpose for such contracts to be considered by the Executive, as Executive recommended the budget and considered contracts in the context of projects and it might therefore be a duplication of consideration.

**Resolved-**

**That the proposed changes to Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations (detailed in Document "AL") be accepted and recommended to Council for approval to support improvements in the organisation's financial and procurement processes and procedures.**

**Action: Strategic Director, Corporate Services**

## **52. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION**

The City Solicitor submitted **Document "AN"** which provided Members with details of proposed amendments to the Constitution for recommendation to Council.

In response to a Member's question it was confirmed that the quorum of the Bradford District Appeals Panel would be 3 Members which included the Chair or Vice Chair and two other Members from the list of 12.

**Resolved-**

- (1) That the proposed amendments to the Constitution set out in Appendices 1-3 of Document "AN" be recommended to Council for adoption and implementation subject to the inclusion that each District Appeals Panel will comprise of three Members.**
  
- (2) That the City Solicitor be granted delegated authority to make**

**consequential amendments to the Constitution as a result of any recommendations approved by Council.**

- (3) That the City Solicitor ensures that any agreed amendments are implemented.**
- (4) That in view of the expiry of the remote meetings regulations at the beginning of May and the court challenge referred to in 2.4 of the report, authority be delegated to the City Solicitor in consultation with the Chair of this Committee to make any necessary amendments to Council Standing Orders to permit the Annual Meeting to take place safely.**

**Action: City Solicitor**

Chair

**Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee.**

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER