

Minutes of a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on Thursday, 22 September 2022 at 10.30 am in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 10.30 am
Concluded 11.55 am

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
Tait Thornton	Felstead	Griffiths

Councillor Tait in the Chair

17. ALTERNATE MEMBERS (Standing Order 34)

18. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

In the interest of transparency all those who were Members of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund disclosed an interest.

19. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2022 be signed as a correct record.

20. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

21. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW OF LOCAL COUNCIL ARRANGEMENTS IN HAWORTH, CROSS ROADS AND STANBURY

The Director of Legal and Governance submitted **Document “J”** which provided feedback from the Community Governance Review for the proposal to dissolve the current Haworth, Cross Roads and Stanbury Parish Council and establish two new Local Councils in Haworth & Stanbury, and Cross Roads, which had been

triggered by receipt of a petition to the Council from local residents.

The Parish Councillors for Haworth, Cross Roads and Stanbury attended the meeting and the Parish Councillor representing Cross Roads spoke on behalf of them all in support of establishing the two new local Councils.

It was reported that over the 6-week period of consultation, 457 representations were made via an online survey or return of paper survey, in addition 91 residents attended the drop in sessions and there were more responses in favour of a new Local Council (80.96%) than there were against (19.04%).

Members were advised of some of the benefits of the proposed new Local Councils such as; local planning would be made easier, it would give more control and more say for the local areas as the current area is too large, requirements and priorities for each area were very different. The proposed new Local Council arrangements would allow people to concentrate on local events and needs.

In response to Members questions it was reported that majority of the councillor vacancies had been filled and that the proposal was to have a similar number of Councillors to other parish councils of a similar size; the only employee for the Local Councils would be the Clerk and that the number of responses from residents were similar to the Shipley Community Governance Review.

Resolved -

- (1) That Members give their support to the proposal to dissolve Haworth, Cross Roads and Stanbury Parish Council and establish two new Local Councils in the same area – as a consequence of meeting the tests in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, as outlined in paragraph 3.4. of the report.**
- (2) That with no significant opinion on the boundary, it is also recommended that the Local Councils follow the boundaries as proposed.**
- (3) That the new Local Councils being named Cross Roads Parish Council and Haworth and Stanbury Parish Council, as set out in the petition received in February 2022 be supported.**
- (4) That the Local Council areas being split into wards, in the case of Haworth and Stanbury, as outlined at paragraph 3.17, along with the suggested numbers of local councillors per Local Council ward be supported.**
- (5) That it should be noted that it is a requirement of the 2007 Act that the Council must make available a document setting out the reasons for the decisions it has taken at the conclusion of a community governance review and to publicise those reasons.**
- (6) That the final approval for the dissolving of the current Parish Council and establishment of two new Local Councils in Cross Roads and Haworth and Stanbury area be referred to Council at the earliest**

opportunity.

Action: Director of Legal and Governance

(Alice Bentley – 01535 618008)

22. INFORMATION GOVERNANCE PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITY REPORT FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

The Director of Finance and IT submitted (**Document “K”**) which presented the information governance performance and activity outcomes that provided assurance to the Committee that the Council’s information governance arrangements were effective.

It was reported that the Corporate Information Governance team had a series of action plans that supported on-going improvement and during the financial year 2021/22 had completed key actions listed in the report.

Members were informed that the report demonstrated the progress made during 2021/22 in implementing key actions that strengthened and ensured the Council had a robust approach to the management, assurance and governance of information, the progress would continue to ensure the Council continued to meet its legal obligation.

Concerns were raised regarding personal data breaches and the importance of individuals completing the data protection training.

Members sought information regarding IT security and cyber-attacks. In response the Officer reported that all laptop hard drives were encrypted to ensure the safety of the information it contained and should a laptop be lost or stolen the Council would have line of sight of the device and could be wiped remotely to ensure that all information stored on the device was removed. Members were informed that there had been an intensive phishing incident last year but no personal data had been breached.

Members were keen to understand the type of information requests received by Council and the timeframe in which these requests were dealt in.

In response, it was reported that the Council received and dealt with Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, Environmental Information and Subject Access Requests (SAR’S). FOI’s and EIR’s were dealt with within 20 working days and information was provided within a month for SAR’s.

Members sought clarity on the range of information requested, data protection training for non PC users, the effectiveness of digital clearing, repeat SAR’s and about information not held.

In response to this, it was reported that the Council received a wide range of different information requests amongst them were a substantial amount of requests for Children’s Social Care, Environmental Health and Planning, Transportation & Highways.

Members were advised that the onus would be on the management to ensure the training had been conducted as it was mandatory. The Council held the first ever Digital Clean Up Week from March 14-19 as part of the International Digital Clean Up Day on 18 March 2022. Members were advised there were no figures to support the effectiveness of the digital clearing however, this would be carried out

every year.

It was reported that the individual requesting SAR would be notified that a repeat SAR would not be permitted within 12 months. Should the Council not be in a position to provide the requested information due to information not held, the requesting party would be made aware and this would not be recorded as an FOI.

Resolved -

That the performance and activity information contained within Document “K” be noted.

(Harry Singh/Tracey Banfield – 01274 437256/434794)

23. COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE AND ACTIVITY REPORT 2021-2022

The Director of Finance and IT submitted **Document “L”** which presented the complaints performance and activity outcomes for the financial year ending 31st March 2022. It provided assurances for the Committee that the Council’s complaint handling arrangements were effective and where appropriate, that there was an action plan in place to ensure improvements were made.

It was reported that there had been an improvement in response rates for complaints from last year however, further improvements were still required as the response rate needed to be above 90%; there had been an increase in the volume of complaints the Council had been receiving particularly for Children’s Services, and whilst further temporary resources had been recruited the volume of incoming complaints showed no signs of abating.

The LGSCO (Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman) had expressed concerns about the time the Council took to respond to enquiries and in some cases, where the information was provided, it was not what was requested or was inadequate causing further avoidable delays for complainants.

Members were advised that the concerns raised by the LGSCO were being addressed with the LGSCO Link Officer and the relevant Council Department and any improvement actions would be added to the 2022/2023 Complaint Handling Improvement Plan.

Resolved -

That the performance improvement information contained within Document “L” be noted and the key actions identified to ensure performance continues to improve be supported.

(Harry Singh/Tracey Banfield – 01274 437256/434794)

24. COUNCIL'S 2021-22 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Director of Finance and IT submitted **Document “M”** which presented the Council’s 2021-22 draft statement accounts. These accounts were subject to approval from external audit.

The Report also briefly detailed the salient financial implications from the accounts. A further report on the accounts would be presented at the meeting of Committee on 24 November 2022. It was also anticipated that the final 2021-22 accounts would be presented on this date.

Members sought further clarification on the contents of the report which included non-value assets and the Collection Fund deficit for 2020-21.

Resolved -

That the financial position from the draft 2021-22 Statement of Accounts be noted.

(Rachel Gledhill-Mosley – 07966 307065)

25. EXTERNAL AUDIT'S PROGRESS REPORT FOR 2021-22 AUDIT OF THE CITY OF BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Document “N” provided the Committee with an update on progress in delivering External Audit’s responsibilities as the Council’s external auditors. It also included a summary of the recent national reports and publications for information.

Resolved –

That the contents of the report be noted.

(Nicola Hallas – 0191 383 6339)

26. WEST YORKSHIRE PENSION FUND (WYPF) 2021/22 REPORT AND ACCOUNTS

The Director of West Yorkshire Pension Fund submitted **Document “O”** which presented the WYPF 2021-22 Annual Report and Accounts. The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013 (LGPS Reg 2013, Regulation 57 specifies that – an annual report must be prepared each year ending 31 March and must be published by 1 December following the year end. The Report provided details on how the Council’s auditor Mazars plan to ensure that the external audit work would be completed to meet WYPF regulatory deadlines.

Resolved -

(1) That West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) 2021/22 Annual Report and Accounts be approved.

(2) That the WYPF’s lowest cost and high quality Local Government Pension Scheme services and financial performance be noted.

ACTION: Director of West Yorkshire Pension Fund

(Ola Ajala – 01274 434534)

27. WEST YORKSHIRE PENSION FUND AUDIT COMPLETION REPORT 2021/22

The External Auditor submitted **Document “P”** which reported on the findings from their work on the West Yorkshire Pension Fund’s Financial Statements. Committee Members sought further clarification on section 5 and 6 of the report regarding Internal control recommendations and Summary of misstatements.

Resolved -

That the report (Document “P”) be noted.

(Abi Medic - 07881

283644)

28. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021-2022

The Director of Finance and IT submitted **Document “Q”** which set out the requirements to conduct the annual review of the effectiveness of the Council’s governance framework and system of the internal control. It reported the conclusions of that review and produced the Annual Governance Statement for 2021-22 to accompany the Council’s Statement of Accounts.

It was reported that in order to address areas of improvement the Council conducted an annual self-assurance process where-by all 4th tier officers were required to complete a questionnaire on their compliance on their key governance issues. The process targeted different aspects of the governance framework each year.

Members were informed that the responses were assessed by Assistant Directors and specialist officers for each area to work out actions taken and to be taken to address any lapses in compliance across the Council.

It was reported that whilst the outcome of the review of effectiveness provided the necessary assurance for Council Services the issues raised in last year’s statement with the requirement to improve Children’s Safeguarding services were still in the process of being resolved through the establishment of the Bradford Children and Families Trust and therefore remained a significant governance weakness.

Members were keen to understand how Elective Home Education was managed and issues around key staffing skills.

In response it was reported that there had been a significant rise in numbers of children being removed from school rolls to elective home education and the new requirements in the Schools Bill required local authorities to keep a register of Children Not in School. The Local Authority had no statutory duty to monitor the

quality of home education on a routine basis. However, contact would normally be made on an annual basis so that the Authority may reasonably inform itself of the current suitability of the education provided.

It was also reported that there continued to be a shortage of professional and skilled staff within the employment market leading to recruitment and retention difficulties to key posts, the report provided a list of actions taken to address this issue in 2021-22.

Resolved –

That the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive be authorised to sign the document (Document “Q”), on behalf of the Council, to accompany the Statement of Accounts 2021-2022.

ACTION: Director of Finance and I.T

(Mark St Romaine – 01274 432888)

Chair

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

THIS AGENDA AND ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER