

Minutes of a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee held on Thursday, 25 January 2024 in Committee Room 1 - City Hall, Bradford

Commenced 10.35 am
Concluded 12.15 pm

Present – Councillors

LABOUR	CONSERVATIVE	GREEN
Tait Godwin K Hussain	Felstead	Love

Councillor Tait in the Chair

109. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

No disclosures of interest in matters under consideration were received.

110. MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2023 be signed as a correct record.

111. INSPECTION OF REPORTS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

112. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 (RIPA 2000) - LEVEL OF USE

The Interim Director of Legal and Governance submitted **Document “AC”** which provided information relating to:

- The number of authorised and approved covert surveillance operations (Nil return) undertaken by the Council’s criminal investigation teams during 2022.
- The use of the Council’s CCTV equipment by the Police/ Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) for covert surveillance.

- IPCO inspection
- Policy review

The Interim Director provided a brief overview of the report and highlighted the key points. It was reported that all departments returned a nil return for 2023, this indicated that the enforcement teams' criminal investigators were able to obtain evidence without the need for covert surveillance, no covert cameras had been used since 2020.

The report was the annual update to members, it was reported that training was provided remotely to relevant officers via the Council's legal services framework arrangements on 21st November 2023 and all officers were reminded that any covert surveillance must be authorised and approved by the Director of Legal and Governance and the Magistrates court respectively and advice should be obtained from Legal Services when any such action is contemplated.

Following the Officer's presentation, members briefly discussed the report and were then given the opportunity to comment and ask questions. The details of these and the responses given are as below.

Members of the Committee were keen to understand if CCTV was value for money. In response to a question regarding CCTV, it was stated that overall CCTV provided good value for money.

A member requested further information on tables presented in the report. In response, the presenting officer advised that he did not have the narrative behind the tables but would provide this information in a future report.

Resolved –

That the contents of the report Document “AC” be noted.

113. CBMDC EXTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS UPDATE 2022-23

The External Auditor presented **Document “AD”** which set out the progress for the ongoing external audit of the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council for financial year 2022-23.

The External Auditor provided a brief overview of the report, stating that the Council had reversed its decision to backdate its change to its Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy 2021/22 and earlier years.

It was further reported that the External Auditors intended to issue the audit certificate for the 2020/21 audit following confirmation that the MRP changes would not impact on 2020/21.

For the 2021/22 audit, it was reported that the External Auditors were awaiting receipt of updated 2021/22 financial statements, removing the backdated MRP

changes and on receipt of the updated accounts the External Auditors would carry out its finalisation procedures and would issue the audit report on the financial statements.

For 2022/23 audit, it was reported that the audit work was progressing well and subject to satisfactory resolution of audit queries, the External Auditors intended to present the Audit Completion Report to the next meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee.

Resolved –

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

114. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022-23 REVIEW

The Strategic Director Corporate Resources presented **Document “AE”** which reviewed progress on the significant governance concerns reported in the Council’s Annual Governance Statement 2022-23 and asked that members consider potential areas for inclusion in the next management assurance questionnaire that would help inform the 2023-24 Annual Governance Statement.

The Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk provided a brief overview of the report, the Statement reported that the Governance and Audit Committee would be kept informed of progress in addressing weaknesses and areas of concern which were, Safeguarding Vulnerable People and Organisational Capacity and its Impact on Statutory Compliance.

It was reported that there were further governance challenges identified for 2023/24, which were as follows:

- Bradford Childrens and Families Trust
- Bradford UK City of Culture 2025
- Delays in External Audit

There was a discussion in relation to the report specifically around sections 2.4, 2.3 and 3.3 of the report.

Members commented that the Committee would like to view the Risk Register on a regular basis.

Resolved -

That members of the Governance and Audit Committee:

- (1) Review the information contained in this report and the progress made in addressing the significant governance challenges.**
- (2) Endorse the further actions planned.**

To be actioned by: Strategic Director Corporate Resources

115. **BUILDING MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

The report of the Strategic Director Corporate Resources **Document “AF”** was submitted, which provided details of the findings and management actions from the internal audit of Built Environment.

The presenting officer reported that five areas of concern were highlighted following on from the Internal Audit Report which was completed in May 2023.

It was reported that there was no statutory requirement to undertake an inspection / re-inspection, however as a service KPI's were being implemented against a robust schedule. The Fire Safety Arrangements & Concordat had been reviewed and were signed off in accordance with review dates.

It was further reported that the review of the current CAFM (computer aided facilities management) system had been undertaken formulating a specification that has been out to tender and a new contract awarded to replace the existing system. Over the coming months the new system would be tested, information migrated, onboarding, training and a “go live” date to be agreed (possibly April 2024). Reporting would be more readily available from October 2024.

The presenting officer reported that additionally they had recently agreed to review the arrangements for internal maintenance budgets/internal recharging to ensure they had the optimum arrangements in place for the continued maintenance of Council assets. However, a VFM (value for money) sampling of various work packages / projects was currently in development and would be reported on in due course.

A brief discussion ensued following the report and members requested that abbreviations should be explained in full in reports presented to the Committee.

Resolved –

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

116. **BRADFORD CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TRUST GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES**

The Executive Director Finance Resources for Bradford Children and Families Trust submitted **Document “AG”** which set out an overview of the governance arrangements for Bradford Children & Families Trust, outlining the Board and Executive Leadership Team, reporting arrangements to the Council and DfE as well as the risk, audit, and assurance arrangements. The report also provided an overview of the Trust's Business Plan, strategic planning framework and Values.

The presenting officer provided an overview of the report and some of the key points were highlighted. It was reported that Bradford Children & Families Trust was established as an independent company limited by guarantee on the 1st April 2023. The Trust had its' own Board, Executive Leadership Team and governance /decision making structures, so was designed to be operationally independent of the Council.

A Breakdown of the Trust's Governance structure was provided including Trust Board Committee structure and Executive Team structure.

The Executive Director reported that the Trust has reporting arrangements to the Council as well as responsibilities to the Department for Education, both directly and through the Improvement Board. Reporting to the Council was through the two formal arrangements established in the Service Delivery Contract. The Operational Joint Working Group (OJWG) met on a monthly basis and oversees day to day delivery of the contract reported on 18 Key Performance Indicators providing a summary of the Trust's performance (these were agreed between the Council and the Trust ahead of go-live and were reviewed on an annual basis). Alongside this, there were 12 Service Level Agreements through which the Council provided a range of support services to the Trust. Delivery of these was monitored through 21 Key Performance Indicators and some supporting Management Information (these were also reviewed on an annual basis, with changes from the first review being effective from 1st April 2025).

It was further reported that the Strategic Joint Working Group meets on a quarterly basis and is chaired by the Council's Lead Member and this group took a more strategic overview, received updates and escalations from the OJWG and was responsible for agreeing change requests, and agreeing the Trust's Business Plan. Both these groups were also designed to hold the Council to account for delivery of support services in accordance with the 12 Service Level Agreements which have been established for provision of these services. There were also a number of Joint Working Protocols being finalised which established less formal arrangements for collaborative working in the provision of other services. This collaborative working across both organisations and all services was the basis for enabling a successful Trust and improved outcomes for children and young people. The Trust also provided reports to the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in respect of progress of improvement and contributes to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee when requested in respect of budget reports.

The Executive Director reported that the audit provision was independent of the Council, provided through Grant Thornton as the Trust's external auditors, whilst the Trust had procured its own internal audit provision through Veritas, rather than getting this from the Council's internal audit function through a Service Level Agreement as had originally been suggested. This was important in ensuring independence and objectivity as well as reassurance that internal audit had the right reporting lines and governance to the Trust, this was in line with arrangements established in most other Trusts.

Ofsted monitoring visits continued on a quarterly basis with the focus determined for each visit to assess improvement of the provision of children's social care services. There were also targeted visits and other inspections which were relevant in assessing performance. The Council was the subject of these inspections and would receive the report, whilst acknowledging that delivery of these services may be provided through the Trust. This retained the accountability and responsibility of the Director of Children's Service role, which remained within the Council.

A member of the Committee referred to section 3.2 of the report and asked if

there would be any interim reports. In response to this, the presenting officer reported that there was a service level agreement of monthly monitoring, and any issues were then picked up in the annual review.

A member of the Committee sought further clarification on section 5.4 of the report. In response to this, it was reported that the Mitigation Plan was interrelated to the general improvement plan, the Mitigation Plan was a key aspect of the monitoring and delivery of the Trust's current year budget. The Mitigation Plan was an input to the monthly budget monitoring process.

Members commented that the report provided a good overview and assurance on governance and audit related matters concerning the Trust.

Resolved –

- (1) That the governance arrangements as detailed in Document “AG” for the Trust be noted.**
- (2) This Committee requests that a further progress report be presented in 6 months.**

To be actioned by: Executive Director Finance Resources for Bradford Children and Families Trust

117. MINUTES OF WEST YORKSHIRE PENSION FUND LOCAL PENSION BOARD MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2023

The role of the Pension Board, as defined by sections 5(1) and (2) of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 is to assist the Council as Scheme Manager in ensuring the effective and efficient governance and administration of the LGPS.

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council (the Council), as Scheme Manager, as defined under section 4 of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013, has delegated legal and strategic responsibility for West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) to the Governance and Audit Committee.

The Director of West Yorkshire Pension Fund submitted **Document “AH”** which reported on the minutes of the WYPF Pension Board meeting held on 13 December 2023.

Resolved –

That the minutes of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund Pension Board meeting held on 13 September 2023 be considered and noted.

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