

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Meeting of the
Audit and Governance Committee
Held on Monday 6 December 2021 at 6:00pm
In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock
Part 1

Present:
Councillors

Jones, P.C.G. (Chairman)
Newbury, J.A.A. (Vice-Chairman)
Allen, F.W.C. Kruskonjic, P.
Crabtree, S.K. Sutton, Mrs. H.M.

8. Apologies

None received.

9. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

No Declarations of Interests were made in addition to those already confirmed by Members in the Register of Members' Interests.

The Chairman advised he was a member of the Staffordshire County Council Pensions Committee.

10. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2021 were approved as a correct record.

11. Internal Audit Progress Report 2021-22

Consideration was given to the Report of the Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager (Item 4.1 – 4.11) *(presented by the Head of Governance and Corporate Services)*.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services took the Committee through the report as follows:

- Appendix 1 – no concern about the percentage of audits completed so far as a greater number would be delivered during the second half of the year. The first half of the year was usually impacted by completing work from the previous year and annual leave being taken during the summer months.
- Appendix 2 – 3 audits completed by 30 September had been given 'partial' assurance ratings, the reasons for why were set out in the accompanying

commentary. 1 audit had not been rated due to the project still being in its early stages.

- Appendix 3 – audits currently in progress were listed.
- Appendix 4 – it had not been possible to revise the assurance ratings on the follow-up audits due to those services being focused on other work and so not able to progress the previously identified actions. This issue had been raised with Leadership Team and progress had since been made.
- Appendix 4 – in respect of the housing safety & compliance audit fire safety tests had resumed, and whilst risk assessments had not been refreshed there was still one in place. Furthermore, the District contained no buildings that were classed as being 'high-rise', nor were there any cladded properties.

In reference to the utilities management audit, a Member noted that via the Financially Resilient Council Scrutiny Committee's review of Council's assets task & finish group, a lot of work was being done so it was expected performance would improve dramatically over the next 2 or 3 months.

Another Member then queried why the repairs to the toilet facilities in the Civic Centre had been delayed. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services replied that the required work was quoted for, but the costings provided came back significantly more expensive than anticipated. As such, officers had been tasked with reviewing the proposed works to try and bring costs down. The Chairman advised he would seek a further update on this issue and report back to Members.

Resolved:

That the Internal Audit progress report for 2021-22 be noted.

12. Strategic Risk Register

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 5.1 – 5.26).

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that as at 30 September, there had been no changes to the number of risks or the categories they were rated in. The scores for two risks had however changed, the details of which were set out in report paragraphs 5.7 and 5.8.

JA – progress update shows no change in number of risk, and still broadly scored in same category. 2 has changed, but not enough to change category of rating (risk C2 and risk C4) (paras 5.7 and 5.8).

Resolved:

That the Strategic Risk Register and progress made in the identification and management of the strategic risks be noted.

13. Appointment of External Auditors

Consideration was given to the Report of the Head of Governance and Corporate Services (Item 6.1 – 6.7).

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services took the Committee through the key issues and reasons for recommendations as set out in report paragraphs 3.1 – 3.4. Members advised they were happy to support the existing arrangements for opting-in to a national scheme.

Resolved:

That Council, at its meeting to be held on 15 December 2021, be recommended to approve the opting-in to the national scheme for external auditor appointments from April 2023.

14. Annual RIPA Review

Consideration was given to the Report of the Council Solicitor (Item 7.1 – 7.3) *(presented by the Head of Governance and Corporate Services)*.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised that the Council very rarely used the powers provided under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPA) Act 2000, having last done so in 2018. The Council's RIPA policy had been kept up to date and relevant officers were trained on a regular basis. The powers contained in the act were stringent on what steps had to be followed should such investigations need to be conducted.

A Member queried if the use of covert CCTV for recording instances of fly-tipping was covered by these powers. The Head of Governance and Corporate Services replied that clarification would be sought as separate arrangements were in place for the use of CCTV.

Resolved:

That the Annual Report be noted.

15. Cannock Chase District Council Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

Consideration was given to the Report of the External Auditors (Item 8.1 – 8.15).

The External Auditor took the Committee through the following sections of the report:

- Progress at December 2021 in respect of the financial statements audit, value for money work, certification of claims and returns, and meetings with officers.
- Results of audit work to date – there had been changes to the identified risks since the last update received by the Committee earlier in the year.
- Audit deliverables.

The Head of Governance and Corporate Services advised a decision had been taken to put on hold the audit of the 2020/21 accounts. The Finance team had been experiencing several issues and it was decided to pause this work to allow the team to start preparations for the 2022/23 budget process. The audit would recommence in early January 2022 and as such, the planned meeting of the Committee for that month would be cancelled. The reports related to the audit of accounts would instead be presented to the Committee in March 2022. The Chairman noted it was unfortunate the audit had been delayed but understood the reasons for doing so.

Resolved:

That the Report of the External Auditors be noted

16. Informing the Audit Risk Assessment for Cannock Chase District Council 2020/21

Consideration was given to the Report of the External Auditors (Item 9.1 – 9.30).

Resolved:

That the Report of the External Auditors be noted.

The meeting closed at 6:25 p.m.

Chairman