

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Audit and Governance Committee held Online via the Zoom app on 20 January 2022

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.30 pm and ended at 4.00 pm

27 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

28 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 18 November 2021 were recommended to be brought back to the next committee meeting in order to include an inclusion to Minute 22 Councillor DBS Checks.

Cllr Paul Millar asked for the additional recommendation put forward by Cllr Phil Twiss, to be recorded in the minutes of 18 November 2021. The recommendation at the time had been voted against so therefore had not been recorded in the minutes.

29 Declarations on interest

None

30 Matters of urgency

None

31 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There are no items which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.

32 External Audit Appointment from 2023/24

The Strategic Lead Finance presented his report that set out proposals for appointing the external auditor to the Council for the accounts for the five-year period from 2023/24 and to seek authority for the Strategic Lead Finance to opt in to the national scheme for auditor appointments on behalf of the Council.

RECOMMENDED to Council to;

1. Accept Public Sector Audit Appointments' invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023, and
2. Authorise the Strategic Lead Finance to opt in to the national scheme for auditor appointments for the provision of external audit services starting with the audit of the 2023/24 accounts.

33 **External Audit Progress report - Grant Thornton**

Beth Garner from Grant Thornton provided an update on the progress in delivering their responsibilities as the council's external auditors.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members;

RECOMMENDED:

To note the External Audit Progress report.

34 **Internal Audit Plan Progress 2021/22 - SWAP**

Adam Williams from SWAP provided an update on the 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan as at January 2022. He mentioned he would be seeking feedback from the Committee on any areas of governance and risk that members felt should be covered for future audits in the 2022/23 Audit Plan.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members;

RECOMMENDED:

To note the progress made in delivery of the 2021/22 internal audit plan and findings reported, and additionally to move Grant checking audits to a priority due their nature and importance as from the 2022/23 Audit Plan.

35 **SWAP audit of Integrated Asset Management Contract update**

Joanne Garfoot Acting Service Lead Housing updated members on work undertaken following the findings and recommendations contained within the SWAP Audit report of July 2020 and offer assurance that the amber concerns raised had been dealt with in a timely manner.

The Integrated Asset Management Contract was the delivery mechanism for all the HRA repairs, maintenance and void processes and was managed by our procured contractor Ian Williams. The contract was currently in its 3rd year of operation and the partnership was maturing well. The working relationship between Ian Williams and EDDC was strong and able to withstand considerable challenge when required to ensure delivery targets are met.

In response to a question as to whether the contract been seen by the Committee, it was reported that it had not although there had been input from tenants and the Housing Review Board.

In response to a question as to whether Ian Williams was a good contractor the Strategic Lead Finance replied that in terms of risk there was nothing of concern but this was under constant review.

Further discussion included the following;

- Tenants were fed up having to chase the contractor and then them not turning up as agreed
- Tenant surveys were crucial and should be dealt with by the means of a letter with qualitative information being sought
- Most complaints were about communication
- The use of resident associations with a dedicated spokesperson feeding back would avoid the need to send out surveys

- As with private homeowners it took time to get appointments with contractors to carry out repairs etc.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members;

RECOMMENDED:

to note the report as an update of the SWAP Audit carried out on the Integrated Asset Management Contract in July 2021.

36 **Review of the Anti-Fraud Theft and Corruption Policy, Anti-Bribery Policy and Whistleblowing Policy**

The Monitoring Officer updated members that the Council's Whistleblowing Policy was due for review in January 2022 and the Anti-Fraud Theft and Corruption and Anti-Bribery policies were due for review in September 2022. Having reviewed the policies the recommendation was that they all remained fit for purpose and therefore no amendments were required. They would be reviewed again in three years' time or earlier if circumstances required.

Cllr Paul Millar stated that the whistleblowing policy should include councillors and any other council partners in order to protect members and contractors.

RECOMMENDED that;

Senior Officers confirm that the;

1. Anti-Fraud, Theft and Corruption Policy
2. Anti-Bribery Policy
3. Whistleblowing Policy

remain fit for purpose and would continue to apply unchanged.

37 **RIPA update and policy review**

The Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing's report sought to enable strategic oversight of the Council's RIPA function, to update Members following receipt of the Investigatory Powers Commissioners Report and to seek adoption of the revised Policy.

RECOMMENDED that;

Senior Officers approve the adoption of the revised RIPA Policy.

38 **Audit and Governance Forward Plan**

Cllr Paul Arnott asked why the Seaton Jurassic Centre had not been included on the forthcoming committee meeting's Forward Plan. This had been minuted at the 18 November 2021 meeting as a matter the Audit and Governance Committee would look into. It was pointed out that the matter had been agreed to be added to the 2022/23 Audit Plan. Cllr Arnott concerns were the amount of money due to be spent to keep the building in working order as there were defects in its construction. He said that the council would need to explain to residents why this had happened as the building was only 5 years old. He wanted the Centre's building contract to be looked at, particularly the roof and how it was commissioned. He was concerned that this work would not be looked at until the middle of the year.

There was a debate around moving audits from Quarter 1 2022/23 Audit Plan, audits needed to be scoped which all took time and there was no rush to get this audit underway for the sake of a few months. During discussion it was stated that the Audit and Governance Committee's responsibility was to ensure that everything had been checked.

A recommendation to undertake to get the Seaton Jurassic Centre audit underway as soon as possible in Quarter 1 of the Audit Plan 2022/23 was proposed and voted against.

A second recommendation to replace the Quarter 4 2021/22 Economic Resilience audit for the Seaton Jurassic Centre audit was proposed and voted in favour.

RECOMMENDED that;

Members note the contents of the Committee Forward Plan for 2021/22 and to include the Seaton Jurassic Centre audit in Quarter 4 2021/22 to replace the Economic Resilience audit.

Items to be considered at the March 2022 committee included:

- Annual Audit Plan 2022/23 and Review of Internal Audit Charter
- Internal Audit Plan Progress (to include Seaton Jurassic Centre)
- Auditor's Annual Report
- Audit Findings Report
- Accounting Policies Approval
- Risk Management review – full year review
- Review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance
- Strata Annual Internal Audit report
- RIPA update

Attendance List

Councillors present:

D Barrow
S Gazzard
N Hookway (Vice-Chair)
J Kemp
P Twiss

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Arnott
M Chapman
D Ledger
P Millar

Officers in attendance:

Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
Jo Garfoot, Acting Housing Service Lead
Beth AC Garner, Grant Thornton
Amy Gilbert-Jeans, Service Lead Housing
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Jackson Murray, Grant Thornton

John Symes, Finance Manager
Mark Williams, Chief Executive
Adam Williams, SWAP

Councillor apologies:

S Hawkins
P Hayward
G Pook

Chair

Date: