

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Audit and Governance Committee held at Online via the Zoom app. on 18 November 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 2.30 pm and ended at 3.45 pm

17 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

18 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 23 September 2021 were recommended for approval.

19 Declarations on interest

None

20 Matters of urgency

None

21 Confidential/exempt item(s)

None

22 Councillor DBS checks

The Strategic Lead Governance & Licensing asked members to consider the Council's position in relation to DBS checks and associated risks.

During the debate discussions included the following:

- Consideration to including enhanced DBS checks to protect the most vulnerable in the community
- There was an assumption that councillors already had DBS checks, it gives residents confidence that the council was doing the right thing. It was only a matter of time before this would become legislation anyway
- DBS checks were only as good as the day they were issued. Would we be recommending that parish councillors also had them?
- Publishing DBS data online was not legal unless consent was granted by the individual concerned
- This was important as DBS checks could regulate councillor behaviour. There was a need to lobby Government now
- Government must lead on this
- Councillors have to prove they are fit and proper to undertake their duties, was it not for EDDC to double check this information?
- DBS checks were one factor, the Safeguarding Policy was essential alongside these checks for taking forward any matters that caused concern to a designated person.

Cllr Phil Twiss proposed an additional recommendation as follows;

‘That Members having considered the report and how councillors’ roles had changed significantly in recent times, recommend that Government be lobbied by EDDC in relation to DBS checks and that they be mandatory for all district councillors and relevant others. This would be in the view of giving the public confidence in appropriate people representing them and their interests. That EDDC pay for DBS checks and the cost of lobbying Government together with Safeguarding Training for all councillors.’

The recommendation was voted against.

The Portfolio Holder Democracy, Transparency and Communications thanked Henry Gordon Lennox for his report. She asked that safeguarding training was looked into and what this could include.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that;

Members noted the report and agreed that councillors undertake safeguarding training including training on the Council’s safeguarding policy and its operation.

23 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.

24 Risk Review Summer 2021 - Part 2

Risk information for the 2021/22 financial year was supplied to allow the Committee to monitor the risk status of Strategic and Operational Risks. This followed the full review of risks by responsible officers during May/June 2021.

Having received the report and noted the contents, members;

RECOMMENDED:

To note the current status of risks following the full risk review undertaken in May/June 2021.

25 Referral from Cabinet - Seaton Jurassic

Alastair Woodland from SWAP explained that an audit report could be undertaken early next year concerning value for money on the Jurassic Centre; to include lessons learnt, what was done and what improvements could be done in the future.

From the Chair it was recommended that SWAP be asked to add this matter to their 2022/23 audit plan and ask Scrutiny Committee to look into this matter under their own terms of reference.

26 Audit and Governance Forward Plan

Members noted the contents of the Committee Forward Plan for 2021/22.

Items to be considered at the January committee included:

- Internal Audit Activity – Quarter 3 2021/22
- Audit Findings Report
- Audit Committee Progress update
- Risk Management review – half year review
- Review of the Anti-Fraud Theft and Corruption Policy, Anti-Bribery Policy and Whistleblowing Policy
- Review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance
- Strata Annual Internal Audit report
- RIPA update and policy review
- Update report from Service Lead Housing on SWAP Limited Assurance report

Attendance List

Councillors present:

S Hawkins (Chair)
D Barrow
S Gazzard
P Hayward
N Hookway (Vice-Chair)
P Twiss

Councillor apologies:

J Kemp
G Pook

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

P Arnott
C Brown
S Jackson
P Millar
A Moulding

Officers in attendance:

Amanda Coombes, Democratic Services Officer
Simon Davey, Strategic Lead Finance
Beth AC Garner, Grant Thornton
John Golding, Strategic Lead Housing, Health and Environment
Henry Gordon Lennox, Strategic Lead Governance and Licensing (and Monitoring Officer)
Jackson Murray, Grant Thornton
John Symes, Finance Manager
Alastair Woodland, SWAP

Chair

Date: