

Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) - 29 January 2015

Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 29 January 2015 at 7.30 pm.

Present:	Councillors:	Richard Greening (Chair), Olly Parker (Vice-Chair), Dave Poyser and Paul Smith.
Also Present	Councillors:	Andy Hull and Satnam Gill
Also Present:	Independent member:	David Bennett

Councillor Richard Greening in the Chair

- 20** **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**
Apologies received from Councillor Andrews.

- 21** **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**
Councillor Paul Smith substituted for Councillor Raphael Andrews.

- 22** **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)**
None.

- 23** **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**
RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee and the Audit Committee (Advisory) held on the 29 September 2014 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

It was noted that the Local Government Association had not provided any further information on pension provision for elected members, however, professional advice had been sought and the Audit Committee would be updated once further details were available.

- 24** **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE (Item B1)**

It was reported that there would be a risk management update provided to the Audit Committee every six months outlining the status of key risks and steps taken to enhance the council's maturity risk. In addition it was stated that a full benchmarking exercise would be undertaken after two years.

It was noted that there was a priority to procure temporary accommodation within London where possible in regard to the homelessness risk. The risk report was comprehensive and the need to ensure that the risk management framework was embedded was stressed by the Committee. It was noted that outputs from the implementation of the new risk approach would link in with the Annual Audit Plan for 2015/16.

The Audit Committee noted the risks expressed regarding the IT arrangements in the housing repair service and that these were within the scope of the work undertaken by the internal audit team as part of their planned work.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and the risk management approach agreed.

25 INTERNAL AUDIT INTERIM REPORT (Item B2)

The Committee noted that the I Pay system was the application that allowed residents to pay bills online. The audit of the parking e-permits was to tie in with the implementation date. Members would have the details as soon as available.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

26 COUNCIL TAXBASE AND NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES 2015/16 (Item C1)

The Committee noted the late despatch of Appendix D due to the late receipt of the form from the Government.

It was reported that there was an increase in the council tax base but no change to the collection rate with uncertainty still following the previous changes in the benefits regime. The Committee noted that the biggest risk to the business rates estimates were appeals as these were handled by the valuation office, were not within the control of the authority and were very difficult to accurately forecast.

RESOLVED that

- a) it be agreed that the Council Tax base for the whole area for 2015-16 (or until rescinded) shall be 72,001.07 Band D equivalent properties after adjusting for non-collection.
- b) it be agreed that the Council Tax base for meeting the special expenses issued by the Lloyd Square Garden Committee for 2015-16 (or until rescinded) shall be 44.34 Band D equivalent properties after adjusting for non-collection.
- c) the council tax forecast for 2014-15 be noted.
- d) the completed NNDR1 Form for submission to the Secretary of State be agreed.
- e) the NNDR forecast for 2014-15 be noted.

27 ANNUAL TREASURY AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY (Item C2)

The Committee noted that the interest rate levels were constantly monitored in conjunction with Arlingclose, the Council's consultants, to determine the most appropriate borrowing options.

RESOLVED

That the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2015-16 be noted.

28 CHANGE OF POLLING PLACES - Highbury East, Barnsbury and Holloway (Item C3)

The Audit Committee noted that discussions were currently taking place with New North Academy in St Peter's ward in order for this venue to be used as a polling place. It was expected that this matter would be resolved shortly. The Audit Committee expressed a preference for New North Academy over Cumming Community Centre.

The Audit Committee noted the concern expressed by a member of the public regarding the use of a church as a polling place.

RESOLVED that

- a) The changes to the polling places in Highbury East, Barnsbury and Holloway wards as set out in the report be agreed.
- b) The comments regarding Highbury West and St Peter's ward as set out in the report at paragraphs 3.9 and 3.10 be noted.

c) The designation of Popham and Cumming Community Centre or New North Academy as the polling place for St Peter's ward be delegated to the Chief Executive (as Acting Returning Officer), in consultation with the Chair.

29 UPDATE ON IMPACT OF INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION (Item C4)

The Audit Committee noted that residents could now register to vote online in three minutes. It was also noted that potential electors had been found through the use of data held by other departments. Members considered that all departments should be strongly encouraged to provide data to the electoral services team.

Information regarding the number of residents who had been prevented from registering as they had no national insurance number was not available for members but would be forwarded. The Committee noted that if a national insurance number was not available and the reason supplied, other evidence could be provided.

RESOLVED that

- a) the report be noted;
- b) figures regarding the numbers of residents prevented from registering due to the lack of national insurance information be supplied to members;
- c) all departments provide data information to the electoral services team to help maximise registration.

30 REVISED DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE (Item C5)

The Committee noted the deletion of 3.3 (a) in the report following discussions with the Trade Unions.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Disciplinary Procedure in Appendix 1 (with effect for all disciplinary processes commenced on or after 1 February 2015) be adopted;
- b) that Assistant Chief Executive, Governance HR, be authorised to make minor or consequential changes to the procedure from time to time following discussion with the Trade Unions.

31 MARKET SUPPLEMENTS POLICY (Item C6)

It was expected that the market supplement would reduce the need for agency staff. This would be monitored by Internal Audit and would be reviewed at the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED that

- a) the draft policy as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to full Council agreeing the necessary change to the Pay Policy Statement, be adopted with effect from 1 March 2015.
- b) that the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance HR, be authorised to make minor or consequential changes to the policy from time to time following discussions with the Trade Unions.
- c) That the monitoring of agency staff spend be added to the Internal Audit workplan for 2015/16.

32 WORKPLACE RESOLUTION POLICY (Item C7)

The Committee noted that the pilot would be extended to a number of teams throughout the council rather than one single department. The new process would be measured for success against the previous grievance procedure and reported to members through the Annual Equalities report.

RESOLVED that

- a) the Workplace Resolution Procedure in Appendix 1 be adopted with effect from 1 February 2015 (or such later date as shall be determined by the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance and HR, to ensure the necessary training to support the new procedure has taken place), for the purposes of a pilot.
- b) the procedure be adopted for the whole workforce following the pilot, if, in the view of the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance HR, the pilot has been successful;
- c) the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance HR, be authorised to make minor or consequential changes to the procedure from time to time following discussion with the Trade Unions.

33 ESTABLISHING AN ISLINGTON PENSION BOARD (Item C8)

Councillor Olly Parker took the Chair for this item as Councillor Richard Greening was the Chair of the Pension Sub-Committee.

The Audit Committee noted that the regulations had been published on the 28 January. It was expected that the new Pension Board and the Sub-Committee would work closely together but not duplicate their work.

RESOLVED that

- a) the constitution for the Islington Pension Board as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report be agreed;
- b) the Assistant Chief Executive, Governance HR, be authorised to make minor or consequential changes to the Islington Pension Board Constitution to reflect the requirements of the Local Government Scheme (amendment) Regulations.

34 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (Item E)

RESOLVED that

The press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item as it contained exempt information as specified in paragraphs 1 and 3, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

35 PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF PAYMENTS (Item F1)

RESOLVED that

The redundancy payments set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report be agreed.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm

CHAIR