

Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) - 19 September 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) held at Committee Room 4, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 19 September 2017 at 7.30 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Kat Fletcher (Chair), Nick Wayne and Mouna Hamitouche.
Also Present: **Independent member:** Alan Begg and Nick Whittaker.

Councillor Kat Fletcher in the Chair

157 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Satnam Gill and Rakhia Ismail.

158 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)

Councillor Hamitouche substituted for Councillor Gill.

159 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)

There were no declarations of interest.

160 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2017 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

161 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (Item B1)

Mohammad Sajid gave a presentation to the Committee.

In the discussion it was noted that:-

- In response to a question regarding business rate exemptions it was agreed that further information would be sent to Councillor Hamitouche.
- The Government was moving the timescale in future years in order that the Statement of Accounts be agreed by the end of July. This would have to be resourced for 2018.
- The external auditors stated that it was intended to issue an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements reflecting their robust nature and accuracy. It was also expected that an unqualified value for money conclusion would also be issued for the deadline of the 30 September 2017.
- The external auditors highlighted the key elements of the Annual Governance report and made four recommendations which were accepted by officers.
- Concerns were raised that the audits for 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 could not be formally concluded as there were elector queries still outstanding that related to these years. It was noted that electors could still raise further issues while the

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accounts were still open, even for previous years. It was also necessary to allow the elector a reasonable amount of time to provide detailed information.

- The Committee considered it was desirable to conclude any outstanding issues as soon as possible and requested information regarding the length of time taken to resolve the original complaint in relation to 2013/14.
- The accounts would be approved even with outstanding objections but no certificate would be able to be issued until the issue was resolved.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The audited Statement of Accounts, Pension Fund Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement be approved;
- 2) The auditor's Annual Governance report and Value for Money conclusion be noted;
- 3) The action plan at Appendix 1 of the Annual Governance report be approved;
- 4) The letter of representation as set out in Appendix B of the report be approved.
- 5) Further information regarding business rate exemptions be sent to Councillor Hamitouche.
- 6) Information regarding the length of time it had taken to resolve the original elector complaint in 2013/2014 be sent to members of the Audit Committee.

162 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES (Item B2)

Andrew Smith presented the proposed changes to polling districts and changes following the election held in June 2017.

It was reported that regarding the options available for Highbury East ward, option 1 would be a significant walk for electors at the north or centre of the polling district whilst Option 2 was more at the population centre.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The changes set out in the report in relation to Highbury West and Barnsbury wards be agreed;
- 2) That Option 2, St Joan of Arc Community Centre, Kelross Road, be agreed as the new polling place for Highbury East for polling district NHEC.
- 3) That the comments regarding all other wards be noted.

163 ANNUAL STANDARDS AND MEMBERS CONDUCT REPORT (Item C1)

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

164 MARKET SUPPLEMENTS (Item C2)

In the discussion the following was noted:-

- The use of market supplements had been introduced in March 2015 which had been a relatively short time to judge their effectiveness.
- It was considered that while market supplements may partly provide a solution it would also be beneficial to look at recruitment processes.
- Even with the introduction of market supplements for HASS, approximately 50% of posts remained unfilled and the reasons for this would need to be pursued.
- It was noted that there could be an issue around recruitment campaigns and HR wished to work with managers to look at this.

RESOLVED that

- 1) The update be noted.
- 2) That there be a further update to Audit Committee in six months.

165 **INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17 (Item C3)**

In discussion the following points were noted:-

- A moderate assurance had been issued for the overall opinion and it was expected that any follow up work would not cause any concern.
- Work was allocated between PWC and officers in-house to ensure there was a seamless service.
- Where issues were given a high priority they may be given a three month target date. There was generally good compliance where concerns had been raised. It was noted that the Chief Executive also requested follow up outcomes and tracked audits which encouraged a high level of officer engagement.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the appendices be noted.

166 **WHISTLEBLOWING REPORT - APRIL - AUGUST 2017 (Item C4)**

In the discussion the following points were noted:-

- There was to be some audit work undertaken which would include partnership working.
- The whistleblowing policy was to be republished shortly which may encourage more referrals.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

167 **WHISTLEBLOWING REPORT - EXEMPT APPENDIX (Item E1)**

RESOLVED that the exempt appendix be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

CHAIR