

Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) - 18 May 2020

Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) held via Zoom on 18 May 2020 at 7.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Nick Wayne (Chair), Sue Lukes (Vice-Chair), Andy Hull and Anjna Khurana

Independent member: Alan Begg

Councillor Nick Wayne in the Chair

122 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A2)

Received from Nick Whitaker.

123 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A3)

None.

124 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A4)

None.

125 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A5)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

126 APPOINTMENT TO PENSIONS SUB-COMMITTEE (Item A6)

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Satnam Gill be appointed to the Pensions Sub-Committee, to replace Councillor Andy Hull.

EXTERNAL AUDITOR REPORTS (Item B1)

Ade Oyerinde, Marc Chang and Paul Grady, representing Grant Thornton, were present.

In response to a question as to whether the auditors were confident that they would be able to produce the audit on time, Paul Grady stated that he was confident that, all being well, the final audit report would be produced before the deadline of November 2020.

A member of the Committee asked for a definition of the reference to "beacon properties" in the report. Paul Grady replied that it was a method of property valuation that did not involve the valuation of each property individually. The Director Service Finance said that he would circulate details to members of the Committee of the total number of beacon properties in Islington.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the contents of the report of the Director Service Finance and Acting Section 151 Officer, presenting Grant Thornton's external audit plan for the external audit of the Council and the Pension Fund for the year ending 31 March 2020, be approved.

(b) That the Annual Report 2019/20, appended to the report of Director Service Finance, be also approved.

(c) That the addenda reports on Grant Thornton's response to Covid-19 for both the Council and Pension Fund audits, be also noted.

(d) That information be circulated to members of the Committee on the total number of beacon properties in Islington.

128

GENDER PAY GAP (Item B2)

The Acting Director of Human Resources introduced his report which detailed an analysis of the gender pay gap within the Council. He noted that: the Council's overall mean and median figures for gender showed a positive picture and that these reflected high levels of female representation in middle and senior management: in contrast to gender, pay gaps for BAME staff were larger and the Council was taking a range of actions to improve the progression and recruitment of BAME people into middle and senior grades, including a new management development programme: that through the Workforce Strategy, staff who had not as yet declared a disability would be encouraged to do so, so that action could be taken to provide them with access to the support that they needed at work.

The Committee discussed aspects of the recruitment and retention of BAME senior staff in the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report of the Acting Director of Human Resources, detailing the analysis undertaken to compile information on gender pay gap in the Council, be noted.

129

NEXT STEPS ON STRATEGY AND CHANGE (Item B3)

The Director of Fairer Together, Strategy & Change, introduced her report, which detailed the work of the Strategy & Change Team in strengthening the Council's approach to project and programme management through the establishment of a Project Management Office, the findings of a review of the Project Management Office undertaken earlier this year and the new approach to Corporate Delivery to be rolled out from June, in line with the Council's new Target Operating Model.

She undertook to report back in September to share more detail of directorate and programme plans and the process for risk mitigation.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report detailing the work of the Strategy and Change Team be noted.

130 **2020-21 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN (Item B4)**

Members noted that a number of audits had not been completed, although completion was geared to Q4. In response to questions from members about the sufficiency of resources in the Audit Team, the Head of Internal Audit, Investigations and Risk Management said that the Team was well resourced. An Audit Manager had been appointed and had taken up her post in April 2020. On the matter of whistleblowing complaint investigations, she noted that the length of investigation was due to the practicalities around these particular cases, rather than a resourcing issue.

RESOLVED:

That the 2020-21 Internal Audit Plan, detailed in the report of the Acting S151 Officer, be approved.

131 **WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY (Item B5)**

RESOLVED:

That the revised Whistleblowing policy at Appendix 1 to the report of the Acting S151 Officer, including section 1.3, matters in scope of the procedure and section 3.1, Audit Committee approval for the use of an external investigator, be approved.

132 **WHISTLEBLOWING MONITORING REPORT - 1 APRIL 2019 TO 10 FEBRUARY 2020 (Item B6)**

The Chair asked for written responses on various individual whistleblowing cases in the exempt appendix. Once a response had been received, this would be circulated to all members of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the contents of the report of the Acting S151 Officer, detailing whistleblowing referrals made between 1st April 2019 and 10th February 2020, in addition to referrals carried forward from previous years, be noted.
- (b) That written responses on various individual whistleblowing cases in the exempt appendix, raised by the Chair, be circulated to members of the Committee in due course.

133 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC (Item)

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following items as the presence of members of the public and press would result in the disclosure of exempt information within the terms of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, for the reasons indicated:

<u>Agenda item</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Reasons for exemption under Schedule 12A of the LGA 1972</u>
E1	Whistleblowing monitoring report - 1 April 2019 to 10 February 2020 – exempt appendix	<u>Categories 1, 2 and 7 – Information relating to any individual; Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime</u>
E2	Next steps on Strategy and Change - exempt appendix	<u>Category 1</u>

134 WHISTLEBLOWING MONITORING REPORT - 1 APRIL 2019 TO 10 FEBRUARY 2020 - EXEMPT APPENDIX (Item E1)

Noted.

135 NEXT STEPS ON STRATEGY AND CHANGE - EXEMPT APPENDICES (Item E2)

Noted.

The meeting ended at 9.00 pm

CHAIR