

London Borough of Islington

Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) - 5 October 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee and Audit Committee (Advisory) held at the Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 5 October 2021 at 7.00 pm.

Present: **Councillors:** Nick Wayne (Chair), Janet Burgess MBE, Flora Williamson and Angelo Weekes

Independent members: Alan Begg and Alan Finch

Observer: Councillor Satnam Gill

Councillor Nick Wayne in the Chair

238 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)

Received from Councillor Sara Hyde.

239 DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)

Councillor Angelo Weekes substituted for Councillor Sara Hyde.

240 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item A3)

Councillor Satnam Gill OBE declared an interest in agenda item B1 - Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places - as the Council's representative on the Hilldrop Community Association.

Councillor Janet Burgess MBE also declared an interest in agenda item B1 - Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places – as a trustee of Whittington Community Association.

241 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2021 be confirmed as a correct record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

242 REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES (Item B1)

In her introduction to the report, the Electoral Services Manager drew members' attention to a revised report which had been circulated earlier in the week. Minor typographical amendments had been made to the original report circulated with the agenda pack to ensure that it accorded with references on the accompanying maps of Wards in the Borough.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the changes set out in the revised report of the Director of Law and Governance and detailed on the Ward maps (Appendices 1 and 2 of the report) in relation to the polling districts and polling places for the new Wards in Islington, be approved.

(b) That the Electoral Services Manager and her Team be thanked for their work on the review of the polling districts and places.

243 **INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER (Item B2)**

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report of the Corporate Director of Resources and the Internal Audit Charter appended to the report be approved.

244 **ANNUAL STANDARDS AND MEMBERS' CONDUCT REPORT (Item B3)**

The Director of Law and Governance introduced the report, stating that promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct in accordance with the Nolan principles and legislation was an increasingly important part of proper local authority governance and any authority's reputation. The Council kept its Code of Member Conduct under review and had recently made amendments, in order to maintain its best features and incorporate appropriate LGA recommendations. Broadly speaking, the Council had had a good record in respect of member complaints and declarations of interest in the past year, and had continued to provide training.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Director of Law and Governance detailing the annual report on standards of member conduct, including a summary of complaints received under the Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure and their outcome, be noted.

245 **2020/21 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT (Item B4)**

The Chair drew members' attention to an exempt appendix (appendix 4), comprising the Final Internal Audit Report – Safeguarding Adults (Governance and Records Management) report, which had been circulated to members of the Committee on the preceding day. The audit of Safeguarding Adults Service had achieved a "No assurance" rating. John Everson, Director of Adult Social Services and Stephen Taylor, Director of Adult Social Care Transformation, attended during discussion of this item to respond to questions. They also described the context for the finding and actions undertaken under their stewardship to ensure that mechanisms were in place for adult safeguarding.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report of the Corporate Director of Resources, including exempt appendix 4, detailing the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan, be noted.

246 CYBER DEFENCE ASSURANCE UPDATE (Item B5)

RESOLVED:

(a) That the report of the Corporate Director of Resources be noted as a statement of the types of cyber attacks and ransomware over the last calendar quarter and the actions Islington Digital Services were taking.

(b) That the current position for the Council's cybersecurity assurance programme and the ongoing audits and activity, also as detailed in the report, be noted.

247 BI-ANNUAL WHISTLEBLOWING MONITORING REPORT – 1ST FEBRUARY 2021 TO 31ST AUGUST 2021 (Item B6)

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Corporate Director of Resources, detailing the operation of the Council's whistleblowing procedures from 1 February 2021 to 31 August 2021, be noted.

248 ANNUAL FRAUD REPORT 2020-21 (Item B7)

RESOLVED:

(a) That the report of the Corporate Director of Resources summarising counter-fraud activity carried out by Internal Audit (Investigations) and Housing Investigations be noted.

(b) That the Internal Audit Team and Housing Investigations Team be thanked for their work.

249 REPORTING ON EXIT PAYMENTS (Item B8)

RESOLVED:

(a) That the report of the Corporate Director of Resources detailing the exit payments made to individuals since the revocation of the Regulations be noted.

(b) That it be noted that any termination of employment where the total payment including pension strain, redundancy payments, notice payments and any discretionary payments above £100k would be reported to the earliest available Audit Committee.

250 EXTERNAL AUDITOR PROGRESS UPDATE (Item D1)

The Chair had agreed that this report be considered as urgent business in order that members of the Committee could be apprised of the progress of work to date by the Council's Auditors and the reasons for the delay in the completion of their work on the Statement of Accounts.

The Director of Finance reported that, despite good progress, the increased regulatory requirements and focus underpinning the external audit meant that the completion date would be beyond the September statutory date. It was highly likely that the majority of local authorities would be in the same position. An additional

Audit Committee would be required in early November 2021 to consider and approve the Council's accounts.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the contents of the report of the Corporate Director of Resources, attaching a report from Grant Thornton, the Council's external auditors, entitled "Audit Progress Report and Sector Update", be noted.

(b) That an additional meeting of the Committee be arranged for a date in the first two weeks of November 2021 for the purposes of the consideration of the Statement of Accounts.

(c) That it be noted that the Council was required to place a notice on its website to explain the delay in publication of the audited accounts.

251 **CYBER DEFENCE ASSURANCE UPDATE- EXEMPT APPENDIX (Item F1)**
Noted.

252 **BI-ANNUAL WHISTLEBLOWING MONITORING REPORT – 1ST FEBRUARY 2021 TO 31ST AUGUST 2021 - EXEMPT APPENDIX (Item F2)**
Noted.

253 **ANNUAL FRAUD REPORT 2020-21 - EXEMPT APPENDIX (Item F3)**
Noted.

254 **REPORTING ON EXIT PAYMENTS - EXEMPT APPENDIX (Item F4)**
Noted.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm

CHAIR