

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Wednesday, 26th July, 2023 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

Voting Members:

Cllr P.J. Cullum (Chairman)
Cllr S. Trussler (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr C.W. Card
Cllr A.H. Gani
Cllr Christine Guinness
Cllr Nadia Martin
Cllr Sarah Spall
Cllr Jacqui Vosper
Cllr G. Williams

Non-Voting Member:

Mr Tom Davies – Independent Member (Audit)

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Nem Thapa.

10. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st June 2023 were agreed and signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

11. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Executive Head of Finance introduced the draft Statement of Accounts for 2022/23. It was explained that the external auditors (EY) were not yet in a position to audit the accounts due to the current backlog of audits.

The Executive Head of Finance advised the Committee that a letter had been received from Mr Lee Rowley MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local Government and Building Safety (Department for Levelling UP, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)). A copy of this letter would be circulated to the Committee following the meeting. The letter concerned local audit delays and made proposals for addressing the current local audit backlog, including longer-term changes. A consultation exercise would take place on the proposals and it was understood that implementation of agreed actions would take place in December 2023. The Executive Head of Finance reminded Members that the Council would need to be mindful of possible implications for the Authority.

The Chairman welcomed Kalthiemah Abrahams (Audit Manager, EY) who joined the meeting remotely via Teams. Ms. Abrahams advised the Committee that EY had started the 2020/21 audit, which was estimated to be completed by the end of September/early October 2023. When completed, EY would give the Council time to roll forward for the 2021/22 audit and it was intended that EY would commence its audit of the 2021/22 financial statements in late November/early December. It was the intention that both the 2020/21 and 2021/22 audits would be completed by the end of March 2024.

During discussion, Members raised questions regarding the Council's assets, funding sources, estimated investment returns, and the current and future spend on Union Yard, Aldershot.

RESOLVED: That the draft Statement of Accounts for 2022/23 be noted.

12. QUARTERLY REPORTING OF TREASURY PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

The Committee received the Executive Head of Finance Report No. FIN2312, which set out the Prudential Indicators compliance for the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year, as required by the CIPFA Code for Local Authorities.

The Chief Finance Officer advised that all treasury management activities undertaken in the areas of specific investment limits, security and liquidity during the first quarter of the year had complied fully with the CIPFA Code of Practice.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Head of Finance Report No. FIN2312 be noted.

13. SCHEME OF DELEGATION - TAXI LICENSING HEARINGS

The Committee considered the Executive Head of Operations Report No. OS2310, which proposed an amendment to the Scheme of Delegation in respect of Taxi Licensing Hearings.

It was noted that the Council's Scheme of Delegation currently stated that, where the Executive Head of Operations or Delegated Officer was minded to refuse or revoke a licence for a private hire operator or a hackney carriage and/or private hire driver, the case be referred to the Committee for a decision. It was proposed that the Scheme of Delegation should be amended to ensure expediency of decision making in accordance with the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy, the best use of resources, and that the contentious and most appropriate decisions were referred to a taxi licensing hearing. For this purpose, it was recommended that the Scheme of Delegation should be amended to read:

"Where the Executive Head of Operations (or delegated officer) proposes to refuse or revoke a licence for a private hire operator or a hackney carriage and/or private hire driver, the matter shall be referred to a taxi licensing hearing for decision in the following circumstances:

- The proposed decision would not be in accordance with the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy and is not deemed urgent on public safety grounds;

- The Executive Head of Operations (or delegated officer) considers it appropriate in a particular case (e.g. it is a contentious matter)

Decisions by the Executive Head of Operations (or delegated officer) to suspend, refuse or revoke a licence for a private taxi hire operator or a hackney carriage and/or private hire driver, which are in accordance with the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy and not deemed urgent on public safety grounds, shall be made in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee."

It was advised that, in urgent cases, the current delegated powers to officers should remain in place, in accordance with Department for Transport guidance, to allow for expedient decisions to be made where appropriate.

The Committee was advised that officers were mindful of the implication of resourcing for hearings and the importance of objectivity in decision making and were of the feeling that the proposed amendments should assist with this.

RESOLVED: That approval be given to

- (i) the amendment of the Scheme of Delegation as set out in Part 3, Section 4, Para. 4.5.3 of the Constitution (taxi and private hire licensing and associated licensing arrangements), as follows:

"Where the Executive Head of Operations (or delegated officer) proposes to refuse or revoke a licence for a private hire operator or a hackney carriage and/or private hire driver, the matter shall be referred to a taxi licensing hearing for decision in the following circumstances:

- The proposed decision would not be in accordance with the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy and is not deemed urgent on public safety grounds;
- The Executive Head of Operations (or delegated officer) considers it appropriate in a particular case (e.g. it is a contentious matter); and

- (ii) the addition of a further paragraph as Para. 4.5.4 as follows:

"Decisions by the Executive Head of Operations (or delegated officer) to suspend, refuse or revoke a licence for a private taxi hire operator or a hackney carriage and/or private hire driver, which are in accordance with the Council's Taxi Licensing Policy and not deemed urgent on public safety grounds, shall be made in consultation with the Chairman of the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee."

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That the public be excluded from the meeting during the discussion of the undermentioned item to avoid the disclosure of exempt information within the paragraph of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 indicated against such item:

Minute No.	Para. No.	Category
15	1	Information relating to an individual

**THE FOLLOWING ITEM WAS CONSIDERED
IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC**

15. APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMEN

The Committee considered the Corporate Manager – Democracy Report No. DEM2305, which set out details of two nominations to be approved as Honorary Aldermen of the Borough. This item had been added to the agenda as a matter of urgency.

Provisions for the appointment of Honorary Aldermen were contained in the Local Government Act, 1972 and the criteria adopted by the Council had been circulated to Committee members. The criteria included that former councillors were required to have not less than 16 years' service with the Council or its constituent authorities and should normally be a resident of the Borough. If the proposals were supported by the Committee then arrangements would be made for an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council to be held on 5th October 2023 to enable the honour to be bestowed on those who accepted their invitation to become an Honorary Alderman.

The Committee discussed each of the nominations and was of the unanimous opinion that Mr. T.D. Bridgeman and Mr. J.H. Marsh should be appointed as Honorary Aldermen of the Borough in recognition of their eminent and long service to the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Council, at an Extraordinary Meeting arranged for this purpose, be asked to appoint Mr. T.D. Bridgeman and Mr. J.H. Marsh as Honorary Aldermen of the Borough in recognition of their eminent and long service to the Council and Borough.

The meeting closed at 7.38 pm.

CLLR P.J. CULLUM (CHAIRMAN)
