

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Report of the meeting held on Thursday, 23rd May, 2024 at the Council Offices,
Farnborough at 7.15 pm.

Voting Members

Cllr A.H. Crawford (Chairman)
Cllr Bill O'Donovan (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr Gaynor Austin
Cllr C.W. Card
Cllr Rhian Jones
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr M.D. Smith
Cllr Sarah Spall
Cllr P.G. Taylor
Cllr Jacqui Vosper

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th March 2024 were agreed and signed as a correct record of the proceedings.

2. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24

The Committee considered the Audit Manager's Report No. AUD2404 which presented the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 for review and approval.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 stated that, for each financial year the Council must conduct a review of the effectiveness of the Council's internal control and prepare an annual governance statement for review and approval by the Committee prior to it being signed by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council.

The Report set out the methodology for compiling the Annual Governance Statement and the requirements of the Committee to ensure a meaningful review of the Annual Governance Statement. Members were reminded that they needed to be satisfied that the Annual Governance Statement reflected the governance environment and any actions required to improve it. Members also had to be satisfied that it demonstrated how governance supported the achievement of the Council's objectives.

During discussion, reference was made to the significant challenge to the future financial sustainability of the Council and concerns about achieving a balanced budget. It was confirmed that a Financial Resilience Plan had been prepared to put the Council on a financially stable footing, and that an independent review of the

Financial Resilience Plan by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA) was near completion for publication. This would be published in reports to the Cabinet and Council in July.

Further to both the outcomes of the CIPFA Report and the forthcoming Peer Review, which had been invited by the Council, Members of the Committee indicated support to invite the Leader of the Council, Cllr Gareth Williams, to a future meeting with a view to achieving a better understanding of the new leadership's priorities in relation to the governance issues for the Council. The point was also raised that the opportunity should be taken as part of the Peer Review to consider the effectiveness of the working arrangements for the Overview and Scrutiny function.

Further to the current Annual Governance Statement, the Committee asked that a report be brought to the next meeting with more details on Freedom of Information performance, particularly on response rates and how the Council compared to other local authorities and the subject areas for requests.

RESOLVED: That the Council's Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 be approved for signing by the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council and for publishing alongside the Statement of Accounts.

3. **INTERNAL AUDIT - AUDIT UPDATE**

The Committee received the Audit Manager's Report No. AUD2405 which provided a progress update on the 2023/24 Audit Plan.

The Committee was advised of an update to the table at 3.1 of the report where the figures had changed since publication to eight finalised reports and six draft reports. The two finalised reported were noted as the CIPFA Report and the Parking Report.

In response to a question, it was noted that there were a number of levels of assurance, including full, substantial, reasonable and limited, and that more information explaining these could be found in the Audit Charter. A training session for the Committee on Internal Audit was planned for 16th July 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Manager's Report No. AUD2405 be noted.

4. **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES, LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEES AND CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP**

(1) **Outside Bodies –**

RESOLVED: That the appointment of representatives to outside bodies for the 2024/25 Municipal Year, as set out in the attached Appendix, be approved.

(2) **Appointments and Appeals Panels –**

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Manager - Democracy be authorised to make appointments to Appointments and Appeals Panels in accordance with

the membership criteria set out in the Officer Employment Procedure Rules in the Constitution.

(3) **Licensing Sub-Committee –**

RESOLVED: That the following Members be appointed to serve on the Licensing Sub-Committee for the 2024/25 Municipal Year (three Labour representatives; two representatives of other Groups):

Labour Group: Cllrs A.H. Crawford, Bill O'Donovan and Sarah Spall

Conservative Group: Cllr Jacqui Vosper

Liberal Democrat: Cllr C.W. Card

(4) **Licensing Sub-Committee (Alcohol and Entertainments) –**

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Manager - Democracy be authorised to make appointments from the membership of the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee in accordance with the procedure agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 21st May 2009 and detailed in the Licensing Sub-Committee (Alcohol and Entertainments) Hearings Protocol and Procedure.

(5) **Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis) –**

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Manager - Democracy be authorised to make appointments from the membership of the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee, in accordance with the procedure agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 27th June 2021 and detailed in the Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis) Hearings Protocol and Procedure.

(6) **Constitution Working Group –**

RESOLVED: That the following Members be appointed to serve on the Constitution Working Group for the 2024/25 Municipal Year (seven Members, including a Cabinet Member, the Chairman of the Committee and representatives of other groups):

- Cabinet Member (Cllr Sophie Porter)
- the Chairman of the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee (Cllr A.H. Crawford)
- two representatives of the Labour Group (Cllrs Gaynor Austin and Bill O'Donovan)
- two representatives of Conservative Group (Cllrs G.B. Lyon and Calum Stewart)
- one representative of the Liberal Democrats (Cllr Craig Card)

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.