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General Purposes & Audit Committee

Meeting of held on Thursday, 4 March 2021 at 6.30 pm in This meeting was held remotely.

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Karen Jewitt (Chair);
Councillor Stephen Mann (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Jamie Audsley, Jan Buttinger, Mary Croos, Steve Hollands,
Bernadette Khan, Stuart Millson, Tim Pollard and Joy Prince

Also Present: Councillor Alisa Flemming

PART A

66/21 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the General Purposes and Audit Committee held on 14 January 2021 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

67/21 **Disclosure of Interests**

No declarations were made.

68/21 **Urgent Business (if any)**

There were no items of urgent business.

69/21 **Grant Thornton**

The Committee received a verbal update by a representative of the Council's independent auditor, Grant Thornton, highlighting that:

- When last presented in January, many Items were outstanding
- Since, the Finance team had collated evidence for the Audit team, including 9 further sample Items for Transformation Funding
- Progress was being made and meetings were set up for the upcoming week with the teams to identify a sensible timetable.

70/21

Dedicated School Grant Management Plan

The Committee received a report setting out the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) management plan that addressed the planned recovery of the DSG deficit specifically within the High Needs Block in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy.

Shelley Davies, Interim Director of Education and Youth Service and Orlagh Guaroni, Finance Manager, introduced the report.

The following matters were raised by Members:

- a) Equalities Impact Assessment: Members highlighted the comments from the Equalities Impact Assessment and the possibility of emphasising how the Council was keeping young people at the heart of its decision making
- b) Budget: Following a question from a Member, the Officer explained that the proposed recovery plan had been seen as good practise in coming in to budget within the next 3 years. It was noted that the proposed overspend was one which was agreed as per the recovery plan
- c) Feedback: Following a question from a Member, the Officer confirmed that feedback from families, schools and young people was used to ensure that targets were being met
- d) Risk and mitigation: Following a question from a Member, the Officer confirmed that the next time this report was brought to Committee, they would include the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) so that the Committee could be made aware of any risks and where they have arisen; as well as the mitigations for each risk. These mitigations were not always predictable but could be used as a guide.

Following consideration, it was resolved that the Committee:

1. Agree to note the contents of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) management plan as at February 2021;
2. Agree to note the proposed timetable for the reporting to future GPACs of the actions being taken to address the DSG deficit and to challenge whether sufficient progress is being made.

71/21

Internal Audit Report

The Committee received a report detailing the Council's Internal Audit findings.

Simon Maddocks, Director of Governance, introduced the report.

The following matter was raised by Members:

- a) Powers of recourse: Following a question from a Member, the Officer explained that there was a process of escalation for any school not delivering the agreed actions. This began with engagement with the Council's Education team and could go on to the Schools Forum. It was noted that ultimately, the Council could recall the school's power of delegation if it had any concerns about the school.

Following consideration, it was resolved that the Committee:

1. Agreed to note the Internal Audit Report to January 2021 (Appendix 1).

72/21 **Internal Audit Charter, Strategy and Plan**

The Committee received a report detailing the Council's Internal Audit's Charter, Strategy and Plan.

Simon Maddocks, Director of Governance, introduced the report.

The following matters were raised by Members:

- a) Subsidiaries: Members noted the process for subsidiaries and the importance of the Council paying attention to these. In particular, Members highlighted Brick by Brick and the Officer confirmed that this audit would look at the future of the subsidiary and what may be done in a way that maintains value for the Council
- b) Contact Centre: Members highlighted a number of issues surrounding the Contact Centre, particularly regarding residents issues showing as 'resolved' which had not yet received a response. The Officer noted this issue and stated that it would be picked up if time came available throughout the year or would be added to next year's plan if not.

Following consideration, the Committee resolved to:

1. Approve the Internal Audit Charter (Appendix 1), Strategy (Appendix 2) and the plan of audit work for 2021/22 (Appendix 3).

73/21 **Anti-Fraud Update Report**

The Committee received a report detailing the recent anti-fraud activity of the Council's Anti-Fraud team.

David Hogan, Head of Anti-Fraud, introduced the report.

Following consideration, it was resolved that the Committee:

1. Agreed to note the Anti-fraud activity of the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team for the period 1 April 2020 – 31 January 2021.

74/21 **Corporate Risk Register**

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The Committee received a report presenting the risks recorded as 'high rated' or RED on the Corporate Risk Register as at 24 February 2021.

Malcom Davies, Head of Anti-Fraud, Risk and Insurance introduced the report.

The following matters were raised by Members:

- a) Attendance of Cabinet Member: It was noted that the Corporate Risk Register came under Councillor Woodley's portfolio of Children and Young People. The Chair requested that arrangements be made for Councillor Woodley to attend the next meeting of the Committee to make a representation
- b) OFSTED inspection: Following a question from a Member, the Officer confirmed that all OFSTED inspections had been put on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic. They were in the process of configuring a significant prioritisation list as to where they were to go first once they were up and running again
- c) Addition of dates: Members raised a question around the possibility of adding the date each risk was added to Level 1, and expected date of mitigation. The Officer noted this request.

Following consideration, it was resolved that the Committee:

- 1. Agreed to note the contents of the Corporate Risk Register as at 24th February 2021.

75/21 **Exclusion of Public and Press**

This was not required.

The meeting ended at 8.43 pm.

Signed:

Date: