

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 13 December 2018 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Tony Fish (Chair), Russell Cherry (Vice-Chair), Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly (substituting for Councillor Garry Hague) and Ben Maney

Apologies: Councillor Oliver Gerrish
Councillor Garry Hague
Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT

In attendance: Jonathon Wilson, Assistant Director, Finance
Lee Henley, Strategic Lead, Information Management
Andy Owen, Corporate Risk Officer
Martina Lee, Ernst and Young Representative
Lisa Caplin, Binder, Dijke, Otte (BDO) Stoy Hayward Representative
Wendy Le, Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

21. Minutes

The minutes of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 27 September 2018 were approved as a true and correct record.

22. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

23. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

24. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 - Activity Report April 2018 - September 2018

Presented by the Strategic Lead of Information Management, the report gave an update on the usage and activity of RIPA requests between April and September 2018. Paragraph 3.2.1 highlighted the amendments that had been made after government consultation work had taken place on surveillance activity and with the new General Data Protection Regulation that came in May 2018.

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the Standards and Audit Committee noted the statistical information relating to the use of RIPA for the period 1 April 2018 – 30 September 2018.

1.2 That the Standards and Audit Committee noted the minor changes made to the RIPA Policy (Appendix A).

25. Mid-Year Review of the Strategic/Corporate Risk and Opportunity Register

The report was presented by the Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager who updated the Committee with the key risks and opportunities identified by the review. A new impact considered was the imminent withdrawal of the UK from the EU.

Councillor Johnson declared a pecuniary interest as he was a Director for Thurrock Regeneration LTD and the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

Referring to the Health and Social Care Transformation section on page 49 of the report, Councillor Maney pointed out that clarity was needed on the details around Orsett Hospital. NHS had confirmed that no services would be leaving Thurrock but the wording had suggested otherwise. Being a member of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chair confirmed that some services would be leaving Thurrock and going to other hospitals such as Basildon Thurrock University Hospital. The Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager assured Councillor Maney that his comments would be taken on board for future reports.

Regarding the risks around Brexit, Councillor Maney commented that there should be evidence of exploring these risks. Thurrock could be hugely impacted as there were industries along the ports. He was aware of a task force for Brexit and queried who they reported to. The Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager noted Councillor Maney's points. In answer to Councillor Maney, the Assistant Director of Finance said the Brexit Working Group consisted of stakeholders who reported back to Members. As the UK withdrawal from the EU drew closer, activity in the group had increased.

Councillor Maney went on to ask when the Brexit Working Group had been set up and how reports had been managed. The Assistant Director of Finance replied that individual services had analysed risks within their own departments. A particular focus had been on maintaining the levels of adult social care as this would be one of the more affected areas upon the UK withdrawal from the EU. Another focus was on the external risks to Thurrock such as the ports. However, Brexit was difficult for all councils as had been seen in news forums. When the Brexit Working Group and services identified potential risks of Brexit, they would analyse how the risks would be managed.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That Standards and Audit Committee noted the items and details contained in the Dashboard (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 That Standards and Audit Committee noted the 'In Focus' report (Appendix 2), which highlighted the higher priority items identified by the review.

26. Internal Audit Service Update 2018/19

Presented by the Assistant Director of Finance, the report gave an update of the progress of the audit service. Self-assessment of the service was likely to be undertaken in the next financial year of 2019/20 and appendix 1 provided key points for the service to meet its targets. A report would be brought back to the Committee in between assessment dates.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Standards & Audit Committee:
Agreed that the structure provided members of the Standards & Audit Committee with assurance around the internal control, risk management and governance frameworks.

27. Internal Audit Progress Report 2018/19

The Assistant Director of Finance gave an outline of the report which highlighted the work that had been undertaken on the Internal Audit Plan 2018/19. Section 3 of the report provided an indication of the 4 levels of assurance used for grading identified reports.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Standards & Audit Committee:
Considered reports issued and the work being carried out by Internal Audit in relation to the 2018/19 audit plan.

28. Counter Fraud and Investigation Quarterly Update

The report was presented by the Head of Investigation Team which outlined the performance of the Counter Fraud and Investigation Department (CFID) over the last quarter. Paragraph 3.1 provided an overview of the progress and the CFID would continue to work through the work plan in appendix A. The plan would be brought back again in the next year.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the Standards and Audit Committee noted the performance of the Counter Fraud & Investigation Department.

29. Work Programme

There were no changes to the work programme.

The meeting finished at 7.25 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**