

Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards and Audit Committee held on 19 December 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Gerard Rice (Chair), David Potter (Vice-Chair), Gary Collins, Barry Johnson and Abbie Akinbohun (Substitute) (substitute for Sara Muldowney)

Apologies: Councillors Cathy Kent and Sara Muldowney

In attendance:
Gary Clifford, Chief Internal Auditor
Lee Henley, Strategic Lead, Information Management
David Kleinberg, Assistant Director for Counter Fraud & Investigations
Andy Owen, Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager
Jenny Shade, Senior 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 the 12 September 2019 were approved as a 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) - Activity Report April 2019 - September 2019

Lee Henley, Strategic Lead Information Management, updated Members on the usage and activity of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) requests during the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 and stated that surveillance authorisations could not be summarised in detail so that on-going investigations were not compromised.

With no questions from Members, the Chair referred Members to the recommendation in the report.

RESOLVED

That the Standards & Audit Committee noted the statistical information relating to the use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019.

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

Andy Owen, Corporate Risk and Insurance Manager, provided Members with an update on the key risks and opportunities identified by the mid-year review of the revised Strategic/Corporate Risk and Opportunity Register. Members were referred to the outcomes in the two Appendices of the report with the document being available via the shared Risk and Opportunity Management file on Objective.

With no questions from Members, the Chair referred Members to the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Standards & Audit Committee noted the items and details contained in the Dashboard.**
- 2. That the Standards & Audit Committee noted the “In Focus” report that highlighted the higher priority items identified by the review.**

26. Internal Audit Protocol 2019

Gary Clifford, Chief Internal Auditor, provided Members with an update on the Internal Audit Protocol which had been updated to reflect changes to the Amber/Red assurance option from a position to a negative outcome and changes had been made to the job structure and titles.

Members were informed that the Final Report and Action Plan for Amber/Red opinions may be referred to senior management. If management were to fail to meet the deadlines detailed within the protocol the report would be published without management comments and management would therefore be called to the Standards and Audit Committee to explain the reasons for delay.

With no questions from Members, the Chair referred Members to the recommendation in the report.

RESOLVED

That the Standards & Audit Committee agreed that the Internal Audit Protocol provided the Council and the Internal Audit Service with a process for improving the timeliness of reporting arrangements and set out a formal escalation process for non-compliance.

27. Internal Audit Progress Report 2019/20

Gary Clifford, Chief Internal Auditor, updated Members on the progress report that covered the work undertaken since the last progress report presented to the Standards & Audit Committee on the 12 September 2019. Members were referred to the final assignment report that identified the areas covered and the actions agreed.

Members were informed that work continued on the work around the payments by result funding provided as part of the troubled families programme, the Chief Internal Auditor had completed two grievance investigations with one investigation still ongoing and grants to the value of £130,000 had been spent and accounted correctly for the three grant returns covering Bus Subsidy Grant 2018/19, Pothole and Flood Resilience Funds 2018/29 and the Local Resilience Forum Brexit Contingency Grant 2019/20.

With no questions from Members, the Chair referred Members to the recommendation in the report.

RESOLVED

That the Standards & Audit Committee considered the reports issued and the work being carried out by Internal Audit in relation to the 2019/20 audit plan.

28. Counter Fraud & Investigation Quarterly Update (Q2)

David Kleinberg, Assistant Director for Counter Fraud & Investigations, outlined the performance of the Counter Fraud and Investigation Department over the last quarter for Thurrock Council as a whole as well as the work the team had delivered nationally for other public bodies.

Members were informed of a change to paragraph 3.2 of the report where the fraud value now stood at £716,863.

Members were updated on the current status of two activities in the Work Plan for 2019/20. The Cybercrime Risk Assessment had been extended to March due to the complexity and the Money Laundering Controls for Social Care Finance had slipped to January 2020.

Councillor Johnson asked whether the presentation at the Annual National Health Service Counter Fraud Conference had been a success. David Kleinberg stated the presentation had been a success which had been held in Newcastle over two days where NHS Trusts had been in attendance and had engaged with Thurrock in fighting fraud against the NHS.

RESOLVED

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

29. Work Programme

Members discussed the Standards & Audit Committee work programme.

The meeting finished at 7.12 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