

**Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee
held on 7th January 2016**

Present

Members:

Councillor John Beaumont
Councillor Bill Gifford
Councillor John Horner
Councillor Chris Saint
Councillor Bob Stevens

Independent Members:

John Bridgeman CBE (Chair)
Bob Meacham OBE

Officers:

John Betts, Head of Finance
David Carter, Strategic Director Resources Group
Sarah Duxbury, Head of Law and Governance
Ben Patel-Sadler, Democratic Services Officer
Garry Rollason, Chief Risk and Assurance Manager

External Representatives:

John Gregory, Grant Thornton - Auditors
Grant Patterson, Grant Thornton - Auditors
Andrew Reid, Grant Thornton – Auditors

Members of the public:

None

Observers:

None

1. General

(1) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor June Tandy.

(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Councillor Gifford declared a non-pecuniary interest; the nature of the interest being that he was a District Councillor.

(3) Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 9th September 2015

Sarah Duxbury (Head of Law and Governance) informed the Committee that a briefing paper was being prepared by Janet Neale (Infrastructure Delivery Manager) in relation to Section 106 Agreements – this would be circulated to members in the near future. Members requested that Janet Neale attend the March 2016 meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee to provide additional information on Section 106 Agreements.

It was agreed that the minutes be signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

2. Reports Containing Confidential or Exempt Information

Councillor Horner proposed (seconded by Councillor Stevens) and it was resolved that members of the public be excluded from the meeting for the items mentioned below on the grounds that their presence would involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972.

EXEMPT ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN PRIVATE (PURPLE PAPERS)

3. Consideration of the Exempt Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 9th September 2015

4. Internal Audit Progress Report

REPORTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

5. External Auditors Annual Audit Letter 2014/15

John Gregory (Grant Thornton – Auditors) introduced the report and informed the Committee that Grant Patterson (Grant Thornton – Auditors) would be taking over External Audit responsibilities for the Audit and Standards Committee in the near future. Regulations dictated that the External Auditors were required to change their portfolios of work after a set period of time – John Gregory had now reached this point in relation to his work with Warwickshire County Council and would be taking on a new portfolio of work.

Members noted that the Annual Audit Letter of the External Auditors provided a very positive, certified opinion.

The Committee wished to place on record its thanks to all of the staff involved with the 2014/15 annual audit and to thank John Gregory for all of his work during the several years he had worked with the Council. John Gregory informed the Committee that the Council had taken many positive steps over the past several years and was in a good position to deal with future challenges.

The Audit and Standards Committee noted the contents of the Annual Audit Letter of the External Auditors.

6. External Auditors Report – Audit and Standards Committee Update

Andrew Reid (Grant Thornton – Auditors) introduced the report which provided the Committee with information relating to the progress made by the External Auditors in delivering their responsibilities. The report also provided a summary of emerging national issues and developments and a number of challenge questions in respect of these emerging issues which the Committee may wish to consider.

Members noted that the information contained within this report had been provided in hard copy to senior officers within the Council for their consideration.

Andrew Reid informed the Committee that it was good practice for an Audit Committee to meet on an annual basis to evaluate and assess the work which it had completed over the previous year. Internal Audit and the Council's External Auditors could provide the relevant information to the Committee who could then review it during the meeting. The report produced after this meeting could then be used to inform the wider Council on the work of the Audit and Standards Committee.

The Committee expressed a view that they would be keen to undertake this work. It was agreed that the best time to facilitate this meeting would be after the next Annual Governance Statement was issued.

The Audit and Standards Committee noted the contents of the External Auditors Report.

7. Work Programme and Future Meeting Dates

The Committee noted that a report would be presented in relation to the Council's appointment of its External Auditors (likely to be in 2017).

The Audit and Standards Committee noted the Work Programme and future meeting dates.

8. Any Other Business

None

The Committee rose at 11.20 am

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Chair