

# **GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

**3 DECEMBER 2018**

Present: Councillor J W Handley, Chair

Councillors: E H Atherton  
T P Brindley  
J C Goold  
G Harvey (substitute)  
R I Jackson  
J M Owen  
J C Patrick  
M Radulovic MBE  
K E Rigby  
R S Robinson

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S A Bagshaw and P J Owen.

## 23. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 24. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2018 were confirmed and signed.

## 25. **INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee noted the recent work completed by Internal Audit.

It was stated that the four outstanding actions were all progressing well and would be cleared by the next meeting.

The role of the Energy Officer with regard to billing and metering processes was queried and it was advised that other departments were assisting with meter readings.

Background information was sought on the trigger for the special investigation relating to a right to buy application. It was advised that the legal department had requested auditors to investigate due to a large rent account credit which had raised concerns in respect of potential money laundering risks. A review of the file had revealed reasonable grounds for the rent credit having been accrued. The trigger sum for money laundering investigations was queried

and it was noted that managers were tasked with alerting the auditors as to all credit balances on accounts with a view to further investigation, if warranted, and to take the necessary steps to prevent credit balances exceeding a certain amount.

26. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT AND FOLLOW-UP – SUNDRY DEBTORS

Members noted the progress made in respect of the agreed management action following the audit of Sundry Debtors.

A suitable process had been implemented to address the long-standing issues of reconciliation between sundry debts and the Civica system. Ongoing compliance would be monitored and a report would be brought back to this Committee.

27. PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Committee noted the management progress made in respect of procurement and contract management.

It was noted that the Council's Procurement Strategy was due to be considered by the Policy and Performance Committee on 6 February 2019. Ratification of recruitment of a permanent Procurement and Contracts Officer was also likely to take place at the same time.

28. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

It was queried whether or not other councils had been canvassed as to their risk management strategies. It was confirmed that research had been undertaken with other authorities which had indicated the limitations of the '3x3' risk map threats, hence the amendment of this to '5x5' in the Council's updated Risk Management Strategy.

**RESOLVED that the new Risk Management Strategy be approved.**

29. STATUTORY REPORT OF THE INTERIM MONITORING OFFICER

Members noted the Interim Monitoring Officer's report on the Local Government Ombudsman's finding of maladministration and injustice in respect of the cancellation of a complainant's trial to trade within a town centre.

The report identified four issues in the findings of the report setting out areas of injustice:

- No comprehensive policy in terms of street trading and whether there was, was not clear.

- Confusion at the outset in respect of the role of members of the Jobs and Economy Committee and which officers had delegated authority or not to deal with issues.
- Poor record keeping.
- Poor communications.

The Council had not contested the findings and its complaints procedure had found fault and offered compensation, although the complainant was not satisfied and had escalated her complaint to the Ombudsman. A comprehensive list of the agreed actions the Council was taking were outlined in the Ombudsman's report.

Members expressed concern that this was the first time a finding of maladministration and injustice had been found against the Council and discussion ensued on the report generally and the need for explanations. Councillor Radulovic requested that the Chief Executive make available her notes of the meeting with the complainant referred to in paragraph 47 of the Ombudsman's findings.

Councillor Jackson stated that the Ombudsman's comprehensive report had not laid blame with members.

Councillor Robinson proposed that the Leader of the Council make a proper apology to the complainant in person and Councillor Radulovic seconded the proposal. A recorded vote was requested and the voting was as follows:

<u>For</u>	<u>Against</u>	<u>Abstention</u>
J C Patrick	E H Atherton	
K E Rigby	T P Brindley	
R S Robinson	J C Goold	
M Radulovic MBE	M Handley	
	G Harvey	
	R I Jackson	
	J M Owen	

The proposal was therefore lost.

It was noted that the actions set out by the Ombudsman for the Council to complete within three months of his decision on the complaint would be reported to the Jobs and Economy Committee for approval.

The Interim Monitoring Officer clarified that the allegation concerning the Kimberley Town councillor was outside the remit of the Local Government Ombudsman to investigate and that, despite the allegations, there were no findings of fact in respect of the Town councillor.

30. MEMBER INDUCTION – MAY 2019 ONWARDS

The Committee considered the arrangements for and content of a member induction programme to be offered following the elections on 2 May 2019.

In response to members' suggestions, the Head of Administrative Services confirmed that a list of key contacts and their extension numbers would be produced. Additionally, it was suggested that members be encouraged to meet officers in their key areas and that Groups should encourage new members to attend committee meetings.

It was also confirmed that the induction programme could be amended to include the Rules of Committee, information on procurement and housing site visits.

**RESOLVED that the proposed induction programme for members following the elections in May 2019 be approved, subject to inclusion of the aforementioned matters.**

31. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

Members considered the issues arising from the review of polling districts and polling places.

A minor amendment on page 50 of the agenda was noted in relation to the name of a Polling Place.

**RESOLVED that:**

1. **The proposed changes to the polling district boundaries between GRE2 and GRE3 and KIM4 and KIM5 respectively as set out in appendix 1 be approved.**
2. **That polling places for the Broxtowe Parliamentary Constituency and the part of the Ashfield Constituency within the Broxtowe Borough area be designated as set out in appendix 2.**
3. **That authority be delegated to the (Acting) Returning Officer to make any changes necessary to polling stations at short notice before an election, with any permanent changes being approved by Full Council.**

32. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Work Programme for future meetings.

**RESOLVED that the Work Programme be approved, subject to the inclusion of the items referred to above.**