

GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2024

Present: Councillor S J Carr, Chair

Councillors: E Winfield (Vice-Chair)
M Brown
R Bullock
G S Hills
S P Jeremiah
A Kingdon
W Mee
J M Owen
P J Owen (ex-officio)
S Webb
K Woodhead

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Dannheimer and K A Harlow.

33 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor R Bullock declared an other registerable interest in agenda item 4 due to being a Councillor in the area affected by the ward changes. A dispensation was granted by the Monitoring Officer to enable them to vote on the item. Minute number 3 refers.

Councillor M Brown declared an other registerable interest in agenda item 4 due to being a Councillor in the area affected by the ward changes. A dispensation was granted by the Monitoring Officer to enable them to vote on the item. Minute number 3 refers.

Councillor G Hills declared an other registerable interest in agenda item 4 due to being a Councillor in the area affected by the ward changes. A dispensation was granted by the Monitoring Officer to enable them to vote on the item. Minute number 3 refers.

Councillor J Owen declared an other registerable interest in agenda item 4 due to being a Councillor in the area affected by the ward changes. A dispensation was granted by the Monitoring Officer to enable them to vote on the item. Minute number 3 refers.

Councillor P J Owen declared an other registerable interest in agenda item 4 due to being a Councillor in the area affected by the ward changes. Minute number 3 refers.

34 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2024 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

35 MINUTES FROM THE ADVISORY SHAREHOLDER SUB COMMITTEE

The Committee noted the minutes of the Advisory Shareholder Sub Committee.

36 AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

The Committee noted the Audit Strategy Memorandum from the Council's external auditors and noted the progress made with the 2023/24 audit.

37 INTERIM REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES

The Committee noted the arrangements for the interim review of polling districts and polling places. The purpose of the review was specifically to consider changes to two polling places but comments from any interested party were also welcomed on all other existing polling districts and polling places.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the proposed changes to the designation of polling places set out in Appendix 2 be approved.

38 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Committee considered the report regarding the Community Governance Review 2023.

On 23 May 2024, full Council considered a recommendation on the Community Governance Review (CGR) submitted by the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee following consideration of information supplied by a Member Task and Finished Group (TFG) which had been formed to consider options for the CGR.

RECOMMENDED to Council that the following be approved:

- 1. Not to proceed with the recommendation (Option1) as per the Council meeting held on 23 May 2024, following evidence gathered during the statutory consultation.**
- 2. There to be no change to the existing Community Governance Arrangements within the North of the Borough and the Community Governance Review 2023 be concluded.**
- 3. To address outstanding boundary changes, with a new Community Governance Review, to commence after May 2025, following initial consultation with relevant stakeholders and with the timetable to be agreed.**

39 PLANNING APPEAL COSTS

The Committee noted the recent costs awarded against the Council following successful appeals by developers.

There is currently no specific provision for the cost of planning appeals and, with insufficient monies remaining available within the revenue contingencies budget, the additional costs will have to be funded directly from General Fund Reserve balances.

40 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee reviewed the recent work completed by Internal Audit.

The Internal Audit Plan governs the activity for the year. An audit report is produced at the completion of each assignment with recommendations for improvement. Regular progress reports covering all internal audit activities are submitted to this Committee for scrutiny.

The plan has recognised the Council's priorities as outlined in the Corporate Plan and links closely to the corporate risk management and business planning processes having been prepared with due consideration to the identified strategic risks

RESOLVED that the proposed update to the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25 in Appendix 2 be approved.

41 REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Committee note the amendments to the Strategic Risk Register and the action plans identified to mitigate risks.

RESOLVED that the amendments to the Strategic Risk Register and the actions to mitigate risks as set out be approved.

42 QUARTERLY COMPLAINT REPORT

Members were provided with a summary of complaints made against the Council.

Overall, 115 Stage 1 complaints were received, 19 were investigated under the Stage 2 complaints procedure and four were investigated by the LGO or HO. Under the Stage 2 complaints procedure, nine complaints were not upheld, 10 complaints were upheld. The Ombudsman investigated four complaints made against the Council in quarter 2, of which two were upheld and two were not upheld.

43 FINDINGS OF FAULT DETERMINATIONS REPORTED FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

Members were provided with the recent findings of fault determinations made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman.

44 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW

The Committee noted the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman's (HO) annual review of complaints received and determined against the Council.

The LGSCO and HO have published their annual performance reports for the Council. The purpose of the annual reviews are to help ensure that learning from complaints informs scrutiny at the local level. Supporting local scrutiny is one of the LGSCO's and HO's key business plan objectives. Its corporate strategy is based on remedying injustice and improving public services. Furthermore, the Council provide this scrutiny through its quarterly and annual complaint reports which are reviewed by this Committee and Cabinet.

In 2023/24, the LGSCO registered a total of 17 complaints against the Council. 14 of these complaints were not investigated due to the lack of fault found during initial enquiries. However, the LGSCO investigated three complaints which were upheld.

In 2023/24, the HO investigated nine complaints which were upheld.

45 WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be approved.