

GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 22 JULY 2019

Present: Councillor E Williamson, Chair

Councillors: E Cubley
T A Cullen (substitute)
M Handley
M Hannah
E Kerry
P J Owen (substitute)
M Radulovic MBE
P D Simpson
H E Skinner
I L Tyler
D K Watts

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R H Darby, J M Owen, D A Elliott, H G Khaled MBE and J P T Parker

11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor E Kerry declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 4 in relation to the Council's benefit pension liability as he is Chair of the County Council's Pension Fund.

12 **MINUTES**

The minutes were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

13 **AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS 2018/19 AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

The Committee was informed that the Council's external auditors, Mazars, had concluded their work on the 2018/19 accounts and had produced their Annual Completion Report. A representative from Mazars was present at the meeting and reported that an unqualified opinion, without modification, would be issued on the financial statements. In addition, it had been concluded that the Council had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources. A letter would also be issued to confirm that all outstanding matters identified in the report had been closed.

It was suggested that the surplus made by LLeisure was impressive and the achievements highlighted in the report showed that the Council had much to be proud of.

RESOLVED that:

- 1. The Audit Completion Report for the year ending 31 March 2019 be received.**

2. The Statement of Accounts 2018/19 as circulated and the letter of representation be approved.

14 INTERNAL AUDIT REVIEW 2018/19

In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors, the Chief Audit and Control Officer must deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report which can be used by the Council to inform its Annual Governance Statement. The Committee considered the report which detailed the work undertaken by Internal Audit during 2018/19 and stated that it is the opinion of the Chief Audit and Control Officer that the current internal control environment is satisfactory such as to maintain the adequacy of the governance framework. In terms of the audits completed, the review found that services were operating with appropriate internal controls. Where improvements actions had been agreed, progress was being made for their implementation.

15 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee noted a report on the recent work completed by Internal Audit and progress against the agreed Internal Audit Plans for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

In respect of the audit of payroll, the Committee was informed that there was no experience of bogus employees having been created and paid. It was suggested that further reports should be submitted to the Committee in respect of legionella prevention/testing, cash receipting and Serious and Organised Crime. Although it was not within the Council's role, action could be taken in co-operation with the police to reduce fraud.

16 ANNUAL COUNTER FRAUD REPORT 2018/19

Members noted the Annual Counter Fraud Report 2018/19 which outlined the work undertaken during the year in relation to corruption and money laundering prevention activity. The Committee was also informed of the actions planned for 2019/20.

17 REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

Following the report to the last meeting of the Committee, and in accordance with the timescales set out in the Risk Management Strategy, the Strategic Risk Management Group had met on 8 May 2019 to review the Strategic Risk Register. Details of proposed amendments to the Strategic Risk Register and the actions resulting from the review were highlighted.

It was noted that risks 20 and 21 had not changed since the previous quarter. The Committee was informed that these risks related to the workforce profile. It was considered that this issue should be considered by the Personnel Committee.

It was suggested that it would be useful if the changes which had been made to residual risks from one quarter to the next were identified in reports. This information would be included in future.

RESOLVED that the amendments to the Strategic Risk Register and the actions to mitigate risks as set out in appendix 2 be approved.

18 COMPLAINTS REPORT 2018/2019

The Committee noted a report detailing the complaints which had been made against the Council during 2018/19. It was reported that there had been an overall improvement in the management of the service, including the number of complaints acknowledged within the target three working days.

It was suggested that compliments should be included in future reports as well as complaints. It would also be useful to identify "lessons learned" to help services to improve. The opportunity should be taken to review the complaints process and the capacity of staff to deal with them. It was of concern that not all complaints were being acknowledged with the 3 working day deadline. This should be done as soon as a complaint was received. It was not acceptable that this deadline was not being met. A reminder would be sent to all departments on the need to meet this deadline.

19 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REPORT 2018/2019

The Committee noted a report outlining the performance of the Council in dealing with requests received under the Freedom of Information Act and a breakdown of requests by department. It was reported that there had been a marked increase in the number of request received in 2018/19 to 926 from 752 in 2017/18. Members were informed that a process was being considered for dealing with requests relating to Nottinghamshire County Council which would reduce the number of responses to be issued.

A comment was made regarding requests for information already available on the web site. It was noted however that the number of such requests received was minimal.

20 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that the Work Programme be approved, subject to the inclusion of further reports on cash receipting, legionella testing and prevention and Serious and Organised Crime.