

**GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE held at ZOOM,
on TUESDAY, 2 JUNE 2020 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor E Oliver (Chair)
Councillors G Bagnall, G Driscoll, M Foley, V Isham, A Khan,
S Luck and J De Vries

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Assistant Director - Corporate Services), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer), O Knight (PFI and Performance Officer) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

Also present: D Eagles (BDO Partner)

GAP1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jones.

GAP2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2020 were approved and would be signed by the Chair as a correct record at the next opportunity.

GAP3 AUDIT ADDITIONAL FEES

Mr Eagles from the Council's External Auditors (BDO) gave a summary of the briefing note supplied by BDO and the scale of fees letter from Public Sector Audit Appointments. Three key areas had been identified that required additional works. These areas were valuation of PPE - £3,700, valuation of LGPS pensions liability and allocation of pension fund assets - £1,100 and Group audit - £1,910.

In response to Members' questions about LGPS pensions, Mr Eagles outlined the position in respect of the relationship with actuaries and the timings of pensions liability valuations.

The Director - Finance and Corporate Services said that he was satisfied that the fees increase was appropriate.

Members accepted the BDO briefing note and the proposed increase of fees as stated.

GAP4 DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019-20

The Director - Finance and Corporate Services presented the draft Annual Governance Statement published to complement the Council's Statement of Accounts 2019/20. He stated that the document had been prepared in

consultation with senior officers and that it had been agreed by the Corporate Management Team. It was a living document that would be reviewed and updated to ensure that it was current at the time of publication with the Statement of Accounts. The statement had identified significant governance issues in Section 5, particularly in respect of Equality and Diversity and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Director – Finance and Corporate Services explained that the deadline for external audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts had been put back to the end of September 2020 and that might necessitate moving the date of the September Committee meeting back.

In response to Members' questions, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services and the Assistant Director – Corporate Services stated that other than the issues identified in Section 5 of the statement, there were no other material changes to the previous year's Annual Governance Statement. Internal Audit had to date completed nineteen out of twenty seven audits from the 2019/20 Internal Audit Programme and the other eight audits would be covered. The current situation with staff largely working remotely was explained along with the Gold and Silver Command structures in place. The Council was working in line with Government advice that if it was possible to work from home then staff should work from home. Duty of care arrangements were outlined in respect of staff surveys and mental health issues.

Members approved the draft Annual Governance Statement.

GAP5 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT, 16 DECEMBER 2019 TO 15 MAY 2020

The Assistant Director – Corporate Services gave a summary of the report, which detailed work undertaken by Internal Audit since the last report to the Committee on 13 January 2020 and provided an update on implemented and outstanding internal audit recommendations.

He said that Internal Audit was not considered a critical service and that since 22 April 2020, in tandem with completing audit work as far as possible, Internal Auditors had been working with the Revenues Service and the Benefits Service providing assistance in checking Business Grant applications and Benefit claims.

He said that, as stated in the Draft Annual Governance Statement, eight audits remained unfinished as of 15 May 2020. Two audits were likely to be completed but Internal Interim reports had been issued for the other six audits. All recommendations with an original due date between 31 March and 30 June 2020 had been extended in light of the COVID- 19 emergency.

In response to Members' questions, progress on the Audit Programme together with risk ratings were clarified. The Assistant Director – Corporate Services explained that, in respect of the Leisure review and the repeated recommendation from 2017/18, some fees information on the website from the Leisure provider had been out of date but had since been corrected.

The Director - Finance and Corporate Services stated that £21,000,000 had to date been received from the Government for Business Rates and that a further £1,028,000 discretionary pot had been agreed with discretionary rules being finalised.

The Chair noted the Internal Audit Progress Report as per the recommendation.

GAP6 QUARTER 4 2019/20 KPIS & PIS REPORT

The PFI and Performance Officer gave a summary of the report, which provided the Quarter 4 and Year End 2019/20 outturn and data analysis for all Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Performance Indicators (PIs).

He highlighted that despite pressures imposed on service delivery by the COVID- 19 pandemic towards the end of March 2020, most indicators had still attained target during Quarter 4 2019/20.

In response to Members' questions the PFI and Performance Officer provided details for the three KPIs that had not met their target for year end but which had an amber status. KPIs 11 and 13 related to planning applications, and performance during Quarter 4 2019/20 had both improved in comparison to Quarter 4 2018/19 and KPI 17 related to Local Council Tax Support Collection rate and had been affected by the introduction of Universal Credit and was under review. He also said there had been two KPIs with a red status. KPI 08(a) related to average re-let times and would continue to be closely monitored alongside Uttlesford Norse. KPI 12 related to planning applications that had showed improvement during the year.

The PFI and Performance Officer recognised that whilst 63% of indicators were green status, 37% were either yellow or red status. He agreed to revisit the wording in future reports relating to the majority of indicators meeting targets.

Members highlighted that three of the red and amber PIs related to the planning area. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services said that Consultants obtained via East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) would be undertaking a review of planning processes and would be discussing terms of reference with the Leader and Cabinet. Members of the Committee were looking for some input into the process and the Chair indicated that he would take this forward with the Leader of the Council.

The Chair noted the report.

GAP7 COVID-19 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The PFI and Performance Officer gave a summary of the report, which provided the outturn for all newly introduced performance indicators which monitor how COVID-19 had affected service delivery. He indicated that despite pressures on service delivery the indicators highlighted that services had been performing well

and he specifically drew Paragraph 20 of the report to the attention of Members that detailed five particular issues to note. He stated that indicators had been useful to Gold Command for comparison purposes.

In response to a Member's question in respect of CV15 - Rent lost on voids available to let, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services stated there were currently 25-30 void properties per week but that inspections had now restarted.

The Chair noted the performance of services during the COVID- 19 pandemic as per the recommendation.

The meeting closed at 8:10pm