

GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor E Oliver (Chair)
Councillors G Driscoll (Vice-Chair), J Emanuel, A Khan, B Light, S Luck and M Sutton (substitute for Councillor Foley)

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

Also present: A Lefevre (BDO)

GAP15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were given by Councillors Asker, Foley and De Vries. Councillor Sutton was the substitute for Councillor Foley.

Councillor Light subsequently declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 as a member of Saffron Walden Town Council.

GAP 16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2021 were approved as correct.

GAP17 HOUSING BENEFIT SUBSIDY AUDIT 2019/20 AND AUDITORS GRANT LETTER

The Chair welcomed Ms Lefevre (BDO) to the meeting and gave a summary of the report. The Assistant Director- Resources explained how the LA Error/AD overpayments sum of £37,007 had been retained by UDC.

Ms Lefevre informed Members of the BDO auditing arrangements. She said that Mr Eagles would oversee the audit of final accounts up to March 2021 but that she then took responsibility moving forward. She said that it was hoped that once the external investigation had been completed that the 2019/20 and the 2020/21 accounts could be signed off shortly after each other but that no timescales could currently be given. Ms Lefevre also indicated there was currently a lack of public sector audit resources but that the intention was to move forward on audits.

In response to various questions, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services confirmed that the 2019/20 audit of accounts could not be concluded until the external investigation had been completed. He said that Moody's were due to provide a credit rating imminently for UDC and that he had been in many discussions with them. He said they were aware of the external investigation but that as it was not related to a financial matter, they had indicated that it would not affect the credit rating. He explained that there were several matters that could impact the rating, particularly the financial position of UDC and commercial activities.

Members noted the report.

GAP18 REVIEW OF PILOT SCHEME: TIME PERMITTED FOR QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

The Chair gave a summary of the report. Councillor Driscoll confirmed that he was happy to continue to Chair the Task and Finish Group and that he was waiting for confirmation from one Member that they would be willing to join the Group, together with Councillors Emanuel and Khan who confirmed that were happy to sit on the Group.

RESOLVED that GAP Committee:

- Re-establish the Task & Finish Group relating to Rule 2.4 to allow consideration of member feedback and to deliberate what amendments, if any, are required.
- To appoint Councillors Driscoll, Khan, Emanuel and one additional Councillor, to be determined by Councillor Driscoll, to the Task & Finish Group.
- Instruct the Task & Finish Group to produce a final proposal for consideration of the GAP Committee on 30 November 2021.

GAP19 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Electoral Services Manager gave a summary of the report.

Discussions focussed on the recommendations relating to Saffron Walden Town Council and Swards End Parish Council (parish boundary). The Electoral Services Manager explained the significance of the proposed development land off Radwinter Road that currently rests in the parish of Swards End but could move to be within the Saffron Walden Town Council boundary line. He said there was currently no agreement in place between Swards End Parish Council and Saffron Walden Town Council but that in the event of planning permission being granted an interim community governance review could take place and be brought back to GAP for resolution. He provided explanations for the other recommendations made relating to Saffron Walden Town Council.

RESOLVED that GAP Committee approves the recommendations as set out in Appendix A for final public consultation.

GAP20 2021/22 ANNUAL PFI CONTRACT UPDATE

The PFI and Performance Officer and the Customer Services and Performance Manager gave a summary of the report that provided an annual update on the Uttlesford Leisure PFI contract for the 2021/22 financial year.

In response to questions relating to the potential relocation of Helena Romanes School in Great Dunmow, officers confirmed that they were being proactive in discussions with all contract Partners. It was noted that whilst there could be a reduction in income there might be benefits with regards to local developments to offset this. Officers said the indication had been that teaching at the new site would begin in 2023.

In response to a question about customer satisfaction statistics, officers said that this was captured through monthly surveys at all three sites and that a report was to be published in October 2021 that would benchmark UDC's position in relation to other public sector facilities. Councillor Khan requested that this report be brought back.

It was confirmed that the contract ran until 2035 with no break clause.

Members noted the report.

GAP21 LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN REPORT 2020/21

The Assistant Director – Corporate Services gave a summary of the report that summarised the complaints relating to the Council's services dealt with by the Ombudsman's office for the year ended 31 March 2021 as well as the complaints and compliments received by the Council in the same period. He said there had been 4 complaints received by the Ombudsman; he highlighted that the Council had been found at fault in relation to a disabled facilities grant and adaptations case and a remedy of £7,000 had been awarded to the complainant. This matter had been resolved and reported to Council on 20 July 2021. He said that there had been 175 complaints dealt with internally, of which 52 had been upheld, many of which had been administrative errors due to the pandemic workload. He also reported that 27 formal compliments had been received.

RESOLVED that GAP Committee note the contents of the Ombudsman's annual review letter and the position with regards to complaints and compliments for the year ended 31 March 2021.

GAP22 QUARTER 1 2021/22 PERFORMANCE INDICATOR REPORT

The PFI and Performance Officer gave a summary of the report, which presented the Quarter 1 2021/22 outturn and data analysis for all Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and Performance Indicators (PI's). He drew

Members' attention to paragraphs 16 and 17 of the report that detailed the four KPI's that had not met their target but were within the 10% threshold (amber) and the two KPI's that had exceeded the 10% threshold (red).

He said that since the report had been prepared the PI's in the Development Management area had been reviewed and that methodology in respect of planning appeals would revert in Quarter 2 to the standard as recommended by MHCLG . This would enable comparisons to be made with other Councils.

Councillor Khan commended the report and highlighted three major current concerns as being housing, employment and debt levels. He asked that consideration be given to picking up data from these areas within the PI's. The PFI and Performance Officer said that he would take this back to the Corporate Management Team.

Members noted the Quarter 1 2021/22 Performance Indicator report.

The meeting closed at 7.50 pm.