

**GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE held at
COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON
WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 25 JULY 2019 at 7.30 pm**

Present: Councillor E Oliver (Chair)
Councillors A Dean, G Driscoll, A Khan, A Storah, M Sutton and
J De Vries

Officers in attendance: A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer), S Bronson (Audit Manager), P Evans (Customer Services and Performance Manager), D French (Chief Executive), A Knight (Assistant Director - Resources), O Knight (PFI and Performance Officer), A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services) and N Wittman

Also present: D Eagles and A Langridge (BDO Auditors)

GAP11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jones and Luck.

GAP12 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and signed as a correct record.

GAP13 AUDIT RESULTS REPORT 2018/19

David Eagles gave a summary of the report and apologised on behalf of BDO for not having the audit completed. There had been staffing issues across the whole of the sector and these had been affecting BDO. The audit would be completed by 31 July, which was the date that the statement of accounts needed to be signed off.

The primary outstanding issue was that a pension fund adjustment; officers had challenged BDO as to whether it was necessary for an adjustment to take place. BDO would need to respond to the Committee on this point.

In response to a Member question, David Eagles said prior period adjustment was a simpler way of accounting which is why the Council had chosen to adopt this method of treatment of forward starting loans.

RESOLVED that because the audit results report was incomplete, while other items on the agenda would be considered that night, the Committee would adjourn until 30 July at 17.30.

GAP14 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2018/19

The Assistant Director – Finance gave a summary of the report.

The following documents required formal sign off at the meeting, following approval by the Committee:

- Letter of Representation and the Statement of Accounts – by the Section 151 Officer and the Chairman of the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee.
- Annual Governance Statement (which forms part of the Statement of Accounts) – by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council.

Because the audit results report was incomplete, these documents could not be signed off until the meeting was adjourned on Tuesday 30 July.

Two adjustments had been made in the final accounts, and three errors had not been adjusted on these accounts in discussion with the auditors.

In response to a Member question, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services said discussions were ongoing with the administration regarding the governance arrangements for Aspire.

In response to a Member question, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services said he would talk to the relevant officer who could advise how many accounts had been signed off.

In response to a Member question, David Eagles said BDO was happy with the way valuations of Council land and buildings was undertaken.

RESOLVED to adjourn discussion of this item until 17.30 on 30 July.

GAP15 CYBER SECURITY UPDATE

The Assistant Director – Facilities gave a summary of the report, which was presented to the Committee at its last meeting. However, with the change in membership of the Committee, it was being re-presented so new members could obtain an understanding of the cyber issues facing the authority and the steps being taken to combat them. There was still a requirement for a lead member to be appointed responsible for oversight of cyber security.

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor de Vries as the Lead Member for oversight of cyber security.

GAP16 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT AND OPINION 2018-19

The Internal Audit Manager gave a summary of the report, which advised on the work carried out by Internal Audit during 2018/19 and provided an overall opinion

on the Council's control environment for 2018/19. The report also showed the state of compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which came into effect on 01 April 2013 and was revised and updated from 01 April 2017.

In response to a Member question, officers confirmed Internal Audit was appropriately resourced to deal with the demands upon the department. Any changes for resourcing were put through the Corporate Management Team (CMT), and there was no reason to believe a large-scale project would require the secondment of members of the team.

In response to a Member question, the Internal Audit Manager said the topic of Corporate Equality and Diversity had been picked up by CMT and there was now an officer responsible for overseeing this.

GAP17 INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY AND WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20

The Internal Audit Manager gave a summary of report which informed Members of the review and updating of the Internal Audit Strategy and Work Programme 2019/20.

In response to a question from Councillor Khan, the Internal Audit Manager said the Corporate Plan and the Corporate Risk Register were examined in preparing the audit strategy and risk programme. These documents could be sent to Councillor Khan.

GAP18 QUARTER 1 2019/20 KPI & PI REPORT

The PFI and Performance Officer gave a summary of the report which presented the Quarter 1 2019/20 outturn and data analysis for all Key Performance Indicators and Performance Indicators.

In response to a Member question, the PFI and Performance Officer said the 75% target set for KP1 12, Processing of Planning Applications: Minor applications (within 8 weeks or including any agreed extension time) (Max) was a national benchmark statistic set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

In response to a Member question, the Democratic Services Officer said PI 21, percentage of minutes from meetings within 10 working days (Max), had been affected by turnover of staff within the office and an officer shortage during busy periods leading up to and during the May elections and the following induction period. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services said this target had in the past been reached and the target of 95% was not too high.

In response to a Member question, the PFI and Performance Officer said PI 06, Percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days (Max) was in place to provide a benchmark against a statutory guidance figure set by the

government. The Chair said it was worth considering whether another target could be set because the current target was easily met.

In response to a Member question, the Internal Audit Manager said PI 07, The Level of Achievement attained under the Equality Framework for Local Government (Years) (Max) was a new target for 2019/20 stemming from the results of last year's internal audit.

In response to a Member question, the PFI and Performance Officer said P1 16, Number of Households Living in Temporary Accommodation, had been affected by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, which had increased the amount of prevention work done by the Housing Options Department. Councillor Dean said he would like to refer the matter to the Housing Board.

In response to a Member question, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services said officers could look to review how PI 46, Quality of Decisions: Percentage of Appeals Upheld for Major Planning Applications as a proportion of decisions made (Min) was measured.

In response to a Member question, the PFI and Performance Officer said the government required the Council to measure Performance Indicators 46 and 47. Councillor Storah said the quality of report writing at Uttlesford was good, but not perfect, and small changes to report writing could affect the quality of decision-making. Officers and members were on board with improving the quality of decision-making and this was a work in progress.

In response to a Member question, the PFI and Performance Manager said officers were monitoring KPI 08(a) Average re-let time in days (all re-lets including time spent in works), but performance had been complicated due to many changes of staffing and of the contractor. Her team was looking to work with the Housing Team to go to tender for a new contractor in the next six months. It was important to have the right provider to help ensure the Council met its performance indicators. The Council's Procurement Team was responsible for overseeing contract management.

The meeting adjourned at 9.05pm until 17.30 on 30 July.