

**GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE held at  
COMMITTEE ROOM - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON  
WALDEN, ESSEX CB11 4ER, on MONDAY, 13 JANUARY 2020 at 7.30 pm**

Present: Councillor E Oliver (Chair)  
Councillors G Bagnall, A Dean, G Driscoll, V Isham, R Jones,  
A Khan and J De Vries

Officers in attendance: D French (Chief Executive), R Auty (Assistant Director -  
Corporate Services), S Bronson (Audit Manager), P Evans  
(Customer Services and Performance Manager), D French  
(Chief Executive), C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer),  
O Knight (PFI and Performance Officer), S Pugh (Assistant  
Director - Governance and Legal), A Webb (Director - Finance  
and Corporate Services) and N Wittman (Assistant Director -  
ICT and Facilities)

Also present: D Eagles (BDO Partner)

**GAP27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Light and Luck.

**GAP28 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2019 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

The Chair stated that in respect of the four items on the Committee Action List:

- The letter to the auditors had been emailed to Members.
- Councillor Luck had received the information relating to ethical procurement.
- The governance risk in the Corporate Risk Register would be discussed by the Corporate Management Team. An update on the Corporate Risk Register would be brought to this Committee at the next meeting.
- Clarification had been provided to Members in respect of the Local Plan risk wording.

**GAP29 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER**

Mr Eagles from the Council's External Auditors (BDO) gave a high level summary of the report that summarised the key findings of the 2018/19 audit.

In response to a Member question on sustainable finances, Mr Eagles clarified that the figures related to two different years.

### **GAP30 AUDIT PLAN**

Mr Eagles (BDO) gave a summary of the Audit Planning Report for the year ending 31 March 2020. He outlined the Audit Risks Overview and highlighted the new risk identified of Commercial investments. He explained the basis for the planned fees based on the PSAA- published level and that a letter from PSAA had been sent out in December. It was recognised that discussions on the total fee impact would be held initially with officers in the context of detailed operational planning and interim audit scope so as to best mitigate increases.

The Director - Finance and Corporate Services said that he was unaware of the letter but would follow this matter up.

In response to a Member question about whether the scope of audit work had changed, Mr Eagles confirmed that it had, that fees would reflect actual work undertaken and that fee levels were a national issue.

The Chair accepted the Audit Plan as stated.

### **GAP31 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 01 SEPTEMBER TO 15 DECEMBER 2019**

The Audit Manager gave a summary of the report, which detailed work undertaken by Internal Audit since the last report to the Committee on 26 September 2019 and provided an update on implemented and outstanding internal audit recommendations.

She said that all 2018/19 audits had been completed and provided an updated position since 15 December 2019. The Environmental Health Commercial Food Safety audit had been postponed until Quarter1 in 2020/21 due to lack of senior officer resources in Environmental Health. The audit of Members Allowances had been delayed but was due to start shortly.

In response to Members' questions about the audit opinion of "little" allocated to the Business Continuity and Emergency Planning audit, the Audit Manager explained the basis of the rating and stated that she intended to review the basis of audit opinions. The Chief Executive said that there was a new Emergency Planning Officer in post and that Business Continuity progress and future steps would be outlined to Members. There was a need to embed a new approach and to train people accordingly.

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

### **GAP32 CYBER SECURITY UPDATE**

The Assistant Director – ICT and Facilities gave a summary of the report which reported the work undertaken on cyber security and updated Members on the second year of the Local Government Association's stock take questionnaire. The outcome of the second stock take had been that significant moves forwards

had taken place in enhancing already secure systems in respect of cyber prevention and that the rating had improved to Amber-Green.

In response to Members' questions in respect of the pentagon charts, the Assistant Director outlined security arrangements in place. The Director – Finance and Corporate Services agreed to distribute further information to Members in a different format.

The Chair noted the report as per the recommendation.

### **GAP33 POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW 2019 – SAFFRON WALDEN PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY**

The Chief Executive gave a summary of the report which detailed the statutory responsibility, under the Electoral Registration and Administrations Act 2013, on Councils, via the Returning Officer, to carry out a UK Parliamentary polling district and polling places review every 5 years.

In response to Members' comments and questions about specific polling stations, the Chief Executive said that the European Parliamentary Election and the General Election had enabled some new sites to be tested and explained how the cost of elections could be claimed back from the Government.

In accordance with the recommendation, the committee approved the Returning Officer's recommendations for a revised Scheme of Polling District and Polling Places for the Saffron Walden Parliamentary Constituency with effect from 31 January 2020, as set out in Appendix 1.

### **GAP34 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AT PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Assistant Director – Governance and Legal gave a summary of the report which detailed proposals made by a Working Group to enhance public participation at Planning Committee meetings which had been trialled since 21 August 2019. Public participation rights formed part of the Council's Constitution and changes to the Constitution were reserved for full Council on recommendation of this Committee. The report asked the Committee to recommend that the Council implemented the changes on a permanent basis.

Members suggested that the proposal to allow town/ parish council representatives to comment on statements of fact made by applicants/ agents should be extended to ward councillors (District and County). However, members were hesitant about making changes to the proposals developed by the Working Group.

The Assistant Director – Governance and Legal suggested that he consult Planning Committee members about the proposed change and report any reservations to Council when it considered the Committee's recommendations. This course of action was supported.

RESOLVED that the Committee recommends Full Council to:

- a. Adopt the changes to Planning Committee procedure identified in paragraph 8 of this report, together with an addition to paragraph 8e that the invitation to comment on statements of fact be extended to ward Councillors (District and County) who are present.
- b. Authorise the Assistant Director, Governance and Legal to amend the text of the Constitution to reflect the changes agreed.

**GAP35 QUARTER 2 2019 KPI & PI REPORT**

The PFI and Performance Officer gave a summary of the report, which provided the Quarter 2, 2019/20 outturn and data analysis for all Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Performance Indicators (PIs). He highlighted that two KPIs had exceeded the 10% performance threshold and had therefore attained a 'red' status.

In response to a Member question relating to targets being reduced for Environmental Services KPI 14, the Assistant Director – Corporate Services said that the Committee had approved this target and that targets for 2020/21 would be brought to the next meeting and he would ensure that appropriate Environmental Services information was included. The PFI and Performance Officer confirmed that he would bring back a report on this area.

In response to a Member question relating to PIs in the Environmental Health (Commercial) area and staff shortages, the Director – Finance and Corporate Services said that the submitted data related to the period before staff had left.

Members expressed the general view that they would not expect targets to be dropped.

The meeting closed at 8:40pm