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AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor E Oliver (Chair)
Councillors H Asker, S Barker, G Driscoll, C Fiddy, M Foley (Vice-Chair), T Loveday, S Luck, D McBirnie, R Pavitt and R Silcock

Independent
Persons: D Paul and C Wellingbrook-Doswell

Officers in
attendance: P Hardy (Electoral Services Manager), P Holt (Chief Executive), P Honeybone (Audit Manager), N Katevu (Monitoring Officer), A Knight (Director of Business Performance and People), C Shanley-Grozavu (Democratic Services Officer) and A Webb (Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services)

AS15 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received by Councillor Gregory, as well as David Pearl and Georgina Butcher (Independent Persons).

There were no declarations of interest.

AS16 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

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

AS17 **INTERNAL AUDIT INTERIM REPORT (NOVEMBER 2023) AND AUDIT PLAN (DECEMBER 2023 - MARCH 2024)**

The Audit Manager provided members with an overview of the the interim Internal Audit report as well as the audit plan for December 2023 to March 2024. This summarised the work that Internal Audit has undertaken to date during 2023/24, as well as the priorities for the rest of the financial year.

In response to questions from members, the following was clarified:

- The plan was to delivered 12 audits to at least draft report by the end of March 2024 including one newly identified audit on Blueprint Uttlesford Governance Arrangements. The Audit Manager also flagged two other audits, clarifying that the Key Financial System to be audited was Accounts Payables and that the planned Uttlesford Norse audit would focus on Health and Safety Checks.
- The team were previously under resources but were now up to capacity, following the arrival of the Audit Manager.

- A full audit was planned for the Uttlesford Norse partnership, however this year the Audit team intended to narrow the scope and focus on Health and Safety checks.
- The 2024/25 Audit Plan would include a risk assessment of all audits deferred in the 2023/24 plan in order to ensure audits are focussed on the key risks facing Uttlesford. The Committee could expect the 2024/24 plan in March 2024.
- The audit for the Air Quality Grant had been instructed under the previous Audit Manager as a separate audit to “Grants Received”. The risk assessment for the 2024/25 plan will determine whether this was appropriate.

The Chief Executive confirmed that officers were looking at the co-ordination between the forward plans of Audit and Standards, Scrutiny and other working groups to ensure a more joined up approach in future.

The report was noted.

AS18 **POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES REVIEW 2023/4**

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report on the revised Scheme of Polling District and Polling Places for the North West Essex Parliamentary Constituency.

Members raised concerns regarding accessibility, should the polling station for Saffron Walden Castle East area of Castle ward be moved from the Homebase car park to the Town Hall, and the Football Club was suggested as an alternative.

Officers explained that the Football Club had been considered previously but was not ideal as a voting facility. The Town Hall was more suitable as it was along bus routes and close to other services, however they would continue to monitor feedback from residents. There was always the opportunity to vote via proxy or with a postal vote, if required.

Members supported the proposal by the Acting Returning Officer for Harlow about moving voting from the Church at Bush End to the Hatfield Broad Oak village hall as this was a far superior voting place and felt that the local residents would not object to this as voting facilities were very limited at the church.

It was confirmed that the Local Government Boundary Commission had launched a consultation on their draft proposals for new boundaries for Essex County Council divisions which would result in an additional division in Uttlesford. Should these be adopted, the existing polling stations would remain.

RESOLVED: That approval be given to the (Acting) Returning Officer’s recommendations for a revised Scheme of Polling District and Polling Places for the North West Essex Parliamentary Constituency and for changes to other Polling District and Places within the district, as from 1

December 2023, as set out in paragraph 24 of the report and in Appendix 2.

AS19 INTERIM REVIEW – COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE OF PARISHES

The Electoral Services Manager presented the report on the Interim Community Governance Review of four Parish Council boundaries.

It was confirmed that all the Parish Councils concerned were in agreement with the realignments.

RESOLVED: To approve the following boundary realignments, as set out in Section 6, and as shown in the Appendices.

- Saffron Walden Town Council and Swards End Parish Council
- Great and Little Chesterford Parish Councils

AS20 DATA BREACHES AND DIRECT DEBITS

The Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services provided members with an overview of three recent data breaches and the 1 November Direct Debit issue.

In response to questions, officers confirmed that the Council offered several Direct Debit dates to help residents manage their budgets, and the issue had affected the first of the month which was the largest collection date.

A process had now been put in place which required senior management sign-off Direct Debit collections to reduce the risk of human error again.

The report was noted.

Meeting ended at 19:57