

Minutes

Meeting name	Audit and Standards Committee
Date	Tuesday, 26 March 2024
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor L. Higgins (Chair)

Councillors J. Adcock I. Atherton
M. Brown S. Carter
M. Graham MBE S. Orson
T. Webster

In Attendance Helen Lillington, External Auditor

Officers Director for Corporate Services
Director for Growth and Regeneration
Assistant Director for Governance and Democracy (Monitoring Officer)
Assistant Director for Planning
Chief Internal Auditor
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer

Minute No.	Minute
32	<p>Apologies for Absence An apology for absence had been received from Councillor Mason. Councillor Lumley was absent.</p>
33	<p>Minutes The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2024 were approved.</p>
34	<p>Declarations of Interest No declarations of interest were received.</p>
35	<p>Internal Audit Progress Report The Chief Internal Auditor, Rachel Ashley-Caunt, introduced the report.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Chief Internal Auditor and her team for their hard work during the year.</p> <p>Following a query on Section 106 monies, the Chief Internal Auditor confirmed the Council collects monies which are then transferred over to other authorities.</p> <p>Regarding the Section 106 monitoring group, the suggestion was made that there should be Member participation or oversight on the group, however it was confirmed that it is an officer group with the aim of analysing and monitoring the Section 106 monies. The group is operational and therefore it would not be appropriate for Member participation.</p> <p>The Committee requested an update on the Section 106 issue in six months with September 2024 being agreed and that it goes on to the 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan for a follow up review.</p> <p>Following a query it was confirmed that the Business Continuity post is a new post in order to support business continuity throughout Leicestershire.</p> <p>It was noted that there was an underspend on environmental health during 2023/24.</p> <p>Councillor Graham proposed the recommendations and Councillor Brown seconded the motion.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Audit & Standards Committee</p> <p>(1) Noted the progress made by Internal Audit in delivery of the Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 and the outcomes of the finalised audit reviews.</p>

	<p>(2) Requested that the Director for Growth and Regeneration updated the Committee in six months on the Section 106 process.</p> <p>(3) Request that the Chief Internal Auditor and the Director for Corporate Services add a follow up review of the Section 106 process to the 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan.</p> <p>(Unanimous)</p>
36	<p>Internal Audit Plan 2024/25</p> <p>The Chief Internal Auditor, Rachel Ashley-Caunt, introduced the report.</p> <p>A Member commented that policy changes in central government has created pressure on both the social housing and private rented sector. They subsequently asked how this would affect the plan. In response the Chief Internal Auditor stated that the 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan is heavy with housing audits because of the changes that have occurred and the subsequent risk that is attached. It is hoped that the Committee are reassured by the focus on housing in 2024/25.</p> <p>In response to a query on whether the Council are carrying out spot checks on landlords within the private rented sector, the Chief Internal Auditor stated that the Council aren't as there is currently no resource to do so. Although Members were informed that there would soon be a resource to do so.</p> <p>Following a query on the meaning of 'complete recovery of rent arrears' it was clarified that this meant that on a case by case basis the Council wants a complete recovery. An amendment to the wording of the plan was agreed to reflect this.</p> <p>Councillor Graham proposed the recommendations and Councillor Brown seconded the motion.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Audit and Standards Committee</p> <p>(1) Reviewed and approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25 (Appendix A).</p> <p>(2) Approved delegated authority for the Director for Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee, to agree amendments to the Plan during the financial year, if required.</p> <p>(3) Approved the Internal Audit Charter and Strategy (Appendix B).</p> <p>(Unanimous)</p>
37	<p>External Audit Plan 2023/24</p> <p>Helen Lillington, External Auditor, introduced the External Audit Plan 2023/24. In doing so she confirmed that the year-end audit would take place between October and December 2024.</p>

Following a comment regarding the audit of the pension scheme, the External Auditor was asked about the mechanism and reasoning for auditing the pension scheme. In response, Members were informed that it is recognised that the Council are not the administrators of the scheme, but the Council are responsible for understanding the figures and entering them into the statement of accounts. Director for Corporate Services added that it is difficult to challenge the figures provided by the Actuary and that there is an element of trust as they are the experts but that there was involvement as part of the triennial valuation on assumptions made.

A query was raised on how to ascertain whether External Audit could establish whether working from home provides the Council with value for money. In response the External Auditor stated that they are unlikely to provide commentary on working from home arrangements. In terms of value for money, External Audit would look at the state of finances; governance or the economic, efficient or effectiveness of something.

In response to a question about engagement with Members, the External Auditor stated that she was happy to liaise with Members within reason but that they must exhaust their own governance channels first.

RESOLVED

The Committee noted the External Audit Plan 2023/24.

38

Annual Standards Update

The Assistant Director for Governance and Democracy (Monitoring Officer) introduced the report.

The Chair stated that training is important and that a mock sub-committee would be good for Members to experience what a Standards Sub-Committee would be like.

In reviewing the numbers of complaints, it was noted that there was no breach of the code in each case.

Members commented that it would be useful that when a complaint is lodged Members are aware of the timescales. It was confirmed that this can be included for future reports. It was explained that the nature of the complaint would determine the timescale, as some cases may require further evidence and could, as a result, last longer. The Committee understood the unpredictable nature of assigning a timescale, but it was agreed that the timescale would be a guide and that that the focus of Members would be on those cases above the average timescale.

RESOLVED

The Committee noted the information presented in relation to the Code of Conduct Complaints for 2023/24.

39	<p>Risk Management Update - March 2024</p> <p>The Director for Corporate Services, Dawn Garton, introduced the report.</p> <p>Following a query regarding the reference to the failure to deliver the MMDR in full or part, it was clarified that this referred to the entire MMDR including the southern section.</p> <p>In response to a question, the Director for Corporate Services stated that future leisure provision would remain on the risk register until it is delivered and the contract is signed.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Committee noted the content of the report and the updated Strategic Risk Register and associated risk management plan, as attached at Appendix A.</p>
40	<p>Urgent Business</p> <p>There was no urgent business.</p>

The meeting closed at: 8.13 pm

Chair