
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 SEPTEMBER 2022

Present: Councillors Shields (Chair), Denness, Furnell (Vice-Chair), D Galton and White

8. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (INCLUDING MATTERS ARISING)**

RESOLVED: that the minutes for the Committee meeting on 25th July, 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

9. **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION, DATA PROTECTION & REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACTS: ANNUAL REVIEW 2021-22**

The Committee noted the report of the Director of Legal and Business Services detailing the statistical information for the financial year 2021-22 with regard to information governance.

The Committee discussed issues raised in the report:

- Directed surveillance, the use of covert human intelligence sources to obtain communications data – how information was used by the Council, limitations of usage and at what point partner agencies were involved.
- Escalation process had been introduced to ensure any potential late requests were brought to senior management's attention to assist with an upturn in compliance.
- Complex requests from a parent of a child who at 13/14 years old had their own rights to be protected. Delays in this area occurred as checks were made to ensure the parent requesting the information were not putting the child at risk.
- Where identified, dialogue across service areas to ensure information gathered was comprehensive and training given to staff where necessary.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the update of the statistical information for the year 1st April 2021 – 31st March 2022 relating to:
 - FOIA and associated legislation
 - GDPR
 - RIPA 2000
- (ii) To note the updated Corporate Surveillance Guidance document (August 2022) as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

10. **ANNUAL REPORT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS 2021-2022**

The Committee noted the report of the Director of Legal and Business Services summarising the type and number of Housing and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman complaints.

RESOLVED to note the report having offered feedback on governance or performance relating to the Ombudsman complaints, to inform or improve future service delivery.

11. **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2021-22**

The Committee received the report of the Executive Director Finance and Commercialisation and Section 151 Officer seeking to review and approve the draft Annual Governance Statement 2021-22.

The Committee discussed the following:

- The People's Strategy had been to the Leaders Cabinet Member Briefing and would be presented to the Unions in a couple of weeks time – subject to any further change, it would then be rolled out to Leadership Group early in the New Year;
- Corporate Plan was expected at November Council meeting;
- Following a recent self-assessment by officers, using guidance issued by CIPFA, looking at how effectively the organisation's governance arrangements support the achievement of outcomes and delivery of value for money. Scoping of the results was to be decided and would be shared with the Committee on benchmarking, benefits realisation and contracting arrangements, which were identified as areas of improvement.
- Following discussion at last month's meeting, it was noted that the inclusion of the impact of the Pandemic in the AGS was less detailed than it had been in previous years. Going forward it was not expected to be shown as a separate section as the impact had become less evident.

RESOLVED to approve the draft 2021-22 Annual Governance Statement as set out in the appendix to the report.

12. **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22**

The Committee received the report of the Executive Director of Finance, Commercialisation and S151 Officer seeking approval of the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 and changes made to the draft identified during the audit.

The Committee discussed the following:

- The revaluation of Council dwellings;
- Pension Fund liabilities;
- Loss of current assets, specifically when a school transfers to become an academy this was recorded as a notional loss in the local authorities accounts;

- The fully utilised Social Care demand, pressures in this area, how reserves were used as a short term resolution and the requirement of the S.151 to provide help with demand and unexpected risks that would be reflected in the Budget proposed to Council in February;
- Schools reserves – due to the Pandemic and periods of lockdown schools were more in surplus than had been anticipated or expected resulting in small surpluses;
- Number of affordable houses – to include the mix of social housing that has been built.

RESOLVED:

- (i) Notes the changes to the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 as a result of the annual audit as detailed in paragraphs 5 to 7 and appendix 1, none of which change the overall bottom line position for the Council for 2021/22.
- (ii) Approves the rationale for not correcting the audit differences relating to Education gross expenditure and income, the valuation of Property, Plant and Equipment (PPE) and Short Term Debtors and Creditors Balances as set out in paragraphs 8 to 12.
- (iii) Notes that infrastructure assets have been disclosed at net book value in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) consultation on temporary changes to the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK (the Code), however removal from the Code of the need to report gross cost and accumulated depreciation had not been formally approved at the time of writing this report, as set out in paragraphs 13 to 16.
- (iv) Considers and approves the audited Statement of Accounts 2021/22; and
- (v) Resolves that the Executive Director for Finance, Commercialisation & S151 Officer, after consultation with the Chair of the Committee, can make any further minor changes to the Statement of Accounts 2021/22 that may arise during completion of the audit.

13. **ANNUAL REPORT ON THE MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Committee received the report of the Director of Legal and Business Services detailing the Annual Report on Members' Code of Conduct.

The Committee noted and discussed the following:

- During the previous year, there had been no substantive Member complaints requiring investigation by the Monitoring Officer. There was one preliminary investigation which was determined not to require a full investigation under the Code. There were no matters referred to the Committee for your determination.
- There had been a previous report on updates to the Code itself which the Committee had agreed to maintain as the current Code of Conduct.
- The only other area of substantive concern for the Monitoring Officer was the uptake in Member training. Whilst training was considered to be good for those Members sitting on regulatory committees, there was work ongoing with Group Leaders and Executive Management Board to put in place a revised training programme to develop mandatory standards of training establishing minimum

participation which was a key area for Governance in terms of probity and decision making for the Authority.

RESOLVED to note the annual report for the year 2021/22.

14. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC - EXEMPT PAPERS INCLUDED IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM**

The Chair moved that in accordance with the Council's Constitution, specifically the Access to Information Procedure Rules contained within the Constitution, the press and public be excluded from the meeting in respect of any consideration of the exempt appendix to the following Item.

15. **STRATEGIC CONTRACTS ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee received and discussed the report of the Head of Supplier Management detailing the performance, governance and contractual matters relating to the Council's most strategically important contracts, excluding those managed by the Integrated Commissioning Unit.

RESOLVED to note the Strategic Contracts Annual Report covering the period April 2021 to March 2022 as set out in the confidential appendix to this report.